Australia's magazine of the performing arts. March 1981 $1.95*

Theatre Australia

Nimrod's New Director

Bill Gaskill and Colin Friels On Hamlet In Sydney

Actress Turns Director

ROBERT COLEBY in Whose Life Is It Anyway?

WOMEN AND THEATRE

THE SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

presents

THE MAN FROM MUKINUPIN

by DOROTHY HEWETT

Music composed by JIM COTTER

Starring (in alphabetical order)
RUTH CRACKNELL
MAGGIE DENCE
JUDI FARR
COLIN FRIELS
JOHN GADEN
RON HADDRICK
JANE HARDERS
NONI HAZLEHURST

Directed by
RODNEY FISHER

Sets by SHAUN GURTON
Costumes by ANNA SENIOR

Lighting by
NIGEL LEVINGS

Musical direction
SARAH DE JONG

Design co-ordination
MELODY COOPER

Choreography
CHRISTINE KOLTAI

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THE SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

presents

HAMLET

by William Shakespeare

Directed by
William Gaskill

Designed by
Hayden Griffin

Starring (in alphabetical order)
Brandon Burke, Stuart Campbell, Ralph Cotterill, Peter Cousens, Max Cullen, Kate Fitzpatrick, John Gaden, Alexander Hay, Noni Hazlehurst, Laurence Held, George Spartels, Andrew Tighe and Colin Friels as *Hamlet*

March 28 to May 9

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Theatre Australia

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SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY

in

'An Evening'

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guest performer **GERALDINE TURNER**
piano **MAX LAMBERT** and **DENNIS HENNIG** • lighting **JOHN RAYMENT**

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COMMENT

ON THE TIGHTROPE

"Subsidy peaked in 1978 and then began to fall severely" notes an overview report by the Theatre Board of the Australia Council, just released. Consequently the continued viability of companies could be affected.

Largely the report is concerned to map out what has been achieved, the network of companies that now exist no need for artists to go overseas, "generally high artistic standards", increased Australian content in seasons hand in hand with an upsurge in playwrighting, community awareness and respect for drama, the high earning power of companies, and so on.

Much of this is mixed in with a degree of self-congratulation. Not undeserved if we give weight to Katharine Brisbane's remarks that the Council is "arguably the most important single influence for good upon the performing arts in Australian history."

The spark - attributed to the "new wave" playwrights of the Williamson Hibberd Buzo ranks - caught fire and with the establishment of the Drama Committee in 1969 big money began to flow into the theatre. From some $200,000 to six companies then, it had risen to $3,000,000 to 18 companies in 1980, an average 300% rise per company in real terms.

The short span of this burgeoning of a true Australian theatre (in that almost two centuries of commercial theatre did nothing to foster it) is everywhere apparent in the report. And though implicitly recognised in fairly sweeping generalisations - "there is an enormously increased awareness of drama as a social and cultural phenomenon" - it is nowhere considered when the shortcomings are trotted out. We do not 'keep having cultural renaissances', as Barry Humphries would have it, but have seen what must be recognised as the naissance of a national theatre movement.

That movement is presently of massive and unprecedented proportions with the network of theatres now existing across the country. It is unstoppable, a major industry in its own right, but is presently suffering from the malaise of a funding shortfall directly related to a not wholly sympathetic government. The Theatre Board can only note the decline in funding, not suggest why it is happening.

Yet companies are being asked to "step up" to cultural complexes springing up on Opera House lines nationwide. Not only do they need more money to perform at the new levels of output and excellence, but the second level groups need additional funding to avoid the disparity where "those companies outside... are severely disadvantaged by the funding (audience levels, calibre of theatre workers etc., etc.) that the Arts Centre will attract". (*Age* 2.8.1980)

Many of the concerns expressed, then, boil down to the comparative youth of the industry and or insufficient funds to institute appropriately corrective programmes.

Shortcomings in script reading, for instance, require the funding of dramaturgs, literary managers in all 18 companies - they could deal with the "dearth of documentation" too. Impending shortages of technicians and "theatre trades people" require expansion of training establishments and funding for in-service programmes. The financial tightrope many of the companies are perilously perched on because of a basic capital deficiency will only be made safe with substantial input as with the MTC which had "an injection of over $1 million from the Victorian Government in 1977".

A major thrust is that companies are becoming less innovative, conservative planning is a concomitant of economic belt-tightening. The right to fail without total collapse is a costly privilege.

The Theatre Board has a go at the critics too, though regrettably more as an opinion than a supported argument as is otherwise the norm in the report. "Range and quality" it pontificates, "is still inadequate".

In fairness to the report generally it does recognise that "resources available to companies from all sources are on the whole insufficient to the levels of activity being undertaken", and it is a pity that more pressure cannot be exerted on government in the light of such conclusions.

It is useful in a far reaching sense to see solid documentation and statistical analyses beginning to be assembled. From 1974 the figures are fairly comprehensive and they allow arguments to be mounted and proposals marshalled on the basis of sound evidence.

Apart from such startling observations as that theatre "manages to survive after more than two thousand years", neo-tautologies such as "the increased acceptance by the community has created a greater awareness and respect for the professional standards of artists" and inadvertent descents into the patronising such as "an Australian play is now not automatically considered a liability ... and it often holds its own", this is a report to be welcomed. Now it needs some clout.

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Commercial Manager: Donald McDonald
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Theatre Australia gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance of the Theatre Board of the Australia Council, the Literature Board of the Australia Council, the New South Wales Cultural Grants Advisory Committee, the Arts Grants Advisory Committee of South Australia, the Queensland Cultural Activities Department, the Victorian Ministry for the Arts, the Western Australian Arts Council and the assistance of the University of Newcastle.

MANUSCRIPTS.
Manuscripts and editorial correspondence should be forwarded to the editorial office: 80 Elizabeth Street, Mayfield, NSW 2304. Telephone (049) 67 4470.
Whilst every care is taken of manuscripts and visual material supplied for this magazine, the publishers and their agents accept no liability for loss or damage which may occur. Unsolicited manuscripts and visual material will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope. Opinions expressed in signed articles are not necessarily those of the editors.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.
The subscription rate is $24 post free within Australia. Cheques should be made payable to and posted to Theatre Publications Ltd, 80 Elizabeth Street, Mayfield NSW 2304.
For institutional and overseas subscription rates see back page.

Theatre Australia **is published by Theatre Publications Ltd, 80 Elizabeth Street, Mayfield NSW 2304. Distributed by subscription and through theatre foyers etc by Theatre Publications Ltd and in newsagents throughout Australia by Allan Radney Wright.**
Theatre Australia **is produced by Soundtracks Publishing Pty Ltd (Tel. (02) 31 8006) on behalf of Theatre Publications Ltd. Typesetting by Get Set Typesetting Pty Ltd (Tel. (02) 357 4276). The magazine is printed by ADM Paramac, Alexandria.**

INFO

A GAMBLE LOST

In the last month's article "Armfield - Adelaide's Big Gamble", Neil Armfield was quoted as saying "I find it hard to make decisions" By the time the article went to press Armfield had changed his mind and decided against taking on the Artistic Directorship of the State Theatre Company of South Australia STC Administrator, Paul Iles, comments

"The cutthroat nature of showbusiness should lead anyone to expect anything If Neil is by nature indecisive, we believed we had the right team to submerge that Perhaps his cold feet were warmed by the undoubted talents of Sydney theatre At any rate, doubtless he will always be welcome as a guest director in Adelaide where he will still have nothing to loose

"The Board of the State Theatre Company immediately advertised the job of Artistic Director; applications closed on February 11 I hope we can still turn up an outrageous formula I hope this will not be remembered when Neil feels ready to join a state theatre company."

Neil Armfield also commented "I believe I should attempt to explain the feelings I contributed to my ultimate decision to withdraw my acceptance to the job of Artistic Director of the State Theatre Company of South Australia During January, I had a growing sense from the Adelaide press of the extraordinary need to make the Company a "success" Of course, I considered the position for so long because I was confident that I can achieve some success, but would the pressure of the focus on the artistic director that I have seen operating already in Adelaide make it success in my own terms? I realised that at this stage in my career I needed to feel and to exercise complete freedom of choice in my work, and that I should not feel threatened or pressured by the prospect of failure Had I continued in my acceptance of the position I would have felt I had a responsibility not to fail."

DARWIN THEATRE

Darwin Theatre Group is back in action in 1981 following a very successful 1980 Last year their funding totalled $23,000 and this year Government and Theatre Board grants have combined to double that figure, showing confidence in the future of theatre in the NT

Robert Kimber returns to the Group as Artistic Director with the commitment to continue the level and range of DTG activities Last year seven major productions were mounted each running for two and a half week seasons and a double bill toured to Alice Springs in September Other touring incorporated workshops and seminars with local groups The popular Sunday Night playreadings will also continue into '81, to which community reponse was extremely positive

YOUNG COMPOSERS COMPETITION

The Victorian State Opera is making an adventurous start to 1981 They first announced their competition for composers as part of the VSO's contribution to "Music '81" They have invited young Australian composers to submit by March 27 a proposal for a short music-theatre work, the competition is open to all Australian composers of 30 years or less The plan submitted should be for a music-theatre work of approximately 20 minutes in length, including details of plot, length of work, instrumentation and size of cast, as well as an example of their work and biographical details It should be preferably for a cast of no more than six and an instrumentation group of no more than eight Two winning entrants will be formally commissioned on April 27 to compose the works proposed in their submission and will receive prize money of $1,000 each The VSO will then stage the works in November this year

Peter Jordan, Resident Director at the VSO has been awarded a grant by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation of $5,000 to assist his studies in Europe during '81 He is one of only a handful of Australian artists to be awarded a grant by this leading foundation. Jordan is also receiving assistance from the Victorian State Opera Club, the English Speaking Union and the Myer and Sir Ian Potter Foundations In January he took up an invitation to join the Royal Opera at Covent Garden on a six month attachment, and he will spend a further six months with the English National Opera at the London Coliseum

KEITH MICHELL — HOME AS PEER GYNT

Keith Michell is back in Australia and working with the Melbourne Theatre Company on a project which is very much his own He described how it all came about

"While I was playing Sherlock Holmes at the Haymarket in London in 1979, I sat down one day to try out an idea that had been bugging me for years - to write a modern, Australian translation of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, the man who is forced to become an expatriot, travels abroad and returns to his native land in later life It turned out to be engrossing work and once I had started I knew I was going to have to go on with it whatever the consequences!

"Six months later after I'd left the Haymarket and was filming in Tunisia, I finished the first few scenes I had no idea that a year or so and several drafts later I would be in Australia with the MTC getting ready to play *Peter McGynt and the Dreamtime* - but when I showed MTC Director John Sumner the script during a visit here last year, he invited me to do just that

"Peter is a dreamer and the dreamtime concept - which has haunted white fella and black fella alike in this country over the years - seems to fit the story uncannily. The fjords and mountains of Norway become the wide open spaces of Australia, the hobhoblins and trolls, bunyips and night spirit manadis, and the great Boyg (which translated means snake) is the rainbow serpent

Keith Michell

"At first I intended writing a musical version of it, but it meant sacrificing so much of the original and I gave up that idea The play is full of music anyway, covering eras of time and place I'm delighted that Bruce Smeaton, whose work I've admired in so many Australian films, was available

to do the score.

"Whenever I've worked in London there have usually been a few Aussies in the various companies I've been with and I've always enjoyed my association with them, this, though, will be the first time for many years that I've worked with a company on home ground. It is the realisation, you might say, of a life-long ambition and I'm grateful to John Sumner and the MTC for the opportunity."

A FUNNY THING FOR NEWCASTLE

Aarne Neeme, Artistic Director of the Hunter Valley Theatre Company, has announced the season that Newcastle can expect for the first half of the year. He will open with the musical comedy *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum* on March 18 in the 1,600 seat Civic Theatre and then return to the Company's permanent home, the 200 seat Civic Playhouse to present *No Names No Packdrill*. Bob Herbert's nostalgic look at World War II has become one of the favourite choices for regional and

Artistic Director of HVTC Aarne Neeme

provincial seasons following its enormously successful Sydney Theatre Company run, the Queensland Theatre Company and National Theatre in Perth are also producing it in 1981.

The rest of the season stays funny and British with Coward's *Hay Fever*, for which Carole Ray will rejoin the Company, then *Playboy of the Western World* and finally the Alan Bennett comedy *Habeas Corpus*. That takes them up to mid-81, they are presenting two seasons this year in order to give them more flexibility.

Aarne Neeme says his aim is "to provide accessible theatre with an emphasis on comedy. Last year's choice of plays was perhaps not exactly what Newcastle people wanted - the Brecht pieces were perhaps not successful, although we had some big successes with, for instance, the locally written musical *The Star Show* and *Travelling North*." As a regional theatre the Hunter Valley Theatre Company feels responsible to the region and to provide what the people of Newcastle really want to see. They certainly started 1981 in that spirit with an enormously popular open-air, promenade children's production of *Treasure Island*.

BUCKLEY'S AT STC, SA

Buckley's - as in Buckley's chance - is the name of the new musical being devised by David Allen and Ariette Taylor for the South Australian State Theatre Company, and for which Nick Enright is writing the lyrics and Glen Henrich the music.

The basic structure of the piece is a gang of unemployed people - not only young ones - who are at a loose end in the city. "It's not just a show about unemployment, but about current conditions in cities which not only create, but reflect unemployment", says Allen. "So it's a picaresque kind of work where they encounter different groups - for instance a radical party, the middle class in suburbia, the police, corruption, massage parlours ..."

The variety of styles is going to make *Buckley's* a very theatrical show, Allen feels, with all the elements uniting in the second half and a wild scene in a hothouse. In early February he had four hours of script which is now being refined, and one of the very promising aspects of the show is that the writers and actors have two weeks of workshop time together before the five week period of rehearsals start.

"It's very much a co-operative piece" says David Allen, "with the actors contributing to the characters. I have written. Ariette and I initially sat down and did a lot of research, she works in a very particular way, not from a plot line but from images - like an idea she had of a lot of people in a bath has grown into an exotic and erotic massage parlour scene, and she had this marvellous idea for the use of a pianola."

Buckley's opens at the Playhouse on April 4, the cast will be mainly the younger members of the STC company plus a dancer from the Australian Dance Theatre and two of the young people who worked with Ariette Taylor in *Filthy Children*.

David Allen

THE VERSATILE ROGER PULVERS

The career of writer/translator/director Roger Pulvers has flourished since he moved to Melbourne last year. In 1980 he was writer director in residence with the Playbox Company but this year is going freelance.

His first venture is the adapation/translation and direction of *The Two*

Roger Pulvers

Headed Calf by Witkiewicz in the Pram Factory's Front Theatre The English language premiere of the play has Maggie Millar, Geoffrey Clendon and William Gluth in the cast and will be designed by Peter King That opens on March 11 and in April will tour to the Adelaide University Little Theatre for the Australian Drama Festival (Presently running in the Pram Factory Back Theatre is *The Real Life Of Sebastian Melmoth - A Play About Oscar Wilde* by Evan Jones, directed by David Kendall)

Later in the year, Pulvers will be back at the Playbox to direct his translation of Strindberg's *The Dance of Death* for them and then the Marionette Theatre of Australia plan to produce his puppet play *General McArthur in Australia* with Richard Bradshaw directing and Patrick Cooke designing they are still looking for a suitable venue in Sydney

And just to further prove his amazing versatility, Angus and Robertson are publishing a novel by Roger Pulvers in May and in mid '82 the ABC will be producing a nine part TV series created by him He has created the characters of the series which will be called *University* (he used to be a university lecturer) and will himself write three of the nine episodes

AUS. BALLET IN '81

1981 looks like being an exciting year for the Australian Ballet, now in its 19th year of continuous operation After a well deserved rest the company reassembled at its Melbourne headquarters at the end of January and is now in rehearsal for its first Sydney season which opens at the Opera House on March 18

Programme 1 will include Gerald Arpino's *Kettentanz*, *Carmen* - which will be danced by Sheree Rayment who has been to France to work on the role with Regine Goury, Petit's chief repetiteur - and *Sylvie Blanc*, one of Serge Lifar's most famous works

Programme 2 will be *Onegin*. Programme 3 includes *Variaciones Concertantes* by Choo San Goh, at present America's darling of the choreographers, and *Poems* by Australian dancer choreographer Robert Ray which was first seen in Melbourne as part of *Creation 80* Programme 4 will be *Swan Lake* and 5 *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* which will be directed by George Ogilvie and designed by Kristian Frederikson

The AB has signed Valentina Kozlova and Leonid Kozlov who defected from the Bolshoi Ballet at the end of its Los Angeles season in 1979, for its '81 season Since their defection the two ex-principal artists of the Bolshoi have appeared as guests with most of the leading western ballet companies around the world, but the AB is the first to secure them for a 12 month contract

Also joining the company is John Vye, as soloist, back in Sydney after some very successful years in Europe He won a scholarship to both the Stuttgart Ballet School *and* the Royal Ballet School in London, so left Australia in 1974 and spent some months studying in both places Since then he has danced for the Royal Ballet Company Munich Opera Ballet Royal Danish Ballet, Norske Opera Ballet and Dutch National Ballet He was the first non-Danish dancer to be offered a principal artist's contract with the famed Royal Danish Ballet

AN EVENING' WITH SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY

The Sydney Dance Company opens its premiere 1981 season in the Sydney Opera House Opera Theatre on March 4 with Graeme Murphy's new, full length work *An Evening* It runs only 10 nights

An Evening contains a wide spectrum of dance and musical styles using the work of composers Charles Ives, Darius Milhaud, Gabriel Faure, Richard Meale, Leonard Bernstein, Jerome Kern Irving Berlin and others Graeme Murphy has devised an overlapping of dance styles rarely to be seen in one sitting - but when seen in the perspective of this work, indicate the path that dance has travelled

As well as using the diverse talents of the 18 members of the Company singer actress dancer Geraldine Turner has been engaged for the season and her contribution is an integral part of the production She will be featured particularly in the section of the work which recaptures the singing and dancing styles of the Broadway stage and the golden years of Hollywood

After the Sydney season, SDC will take *An Evening* to Brisbane and Canberra in april Adelaide in July and August and Melbourne also in August In between the SDC will be going off on its first American tour in May and June - to New York and the Spoleito Charleston Festival, then Woftrap and San Francisco

ELVIS — THE STAGE SPECTACULAR

After over two years of negotiations the award winning production, *Elvis*, is finally set to open at the Capitol Theatre in Sydney on March 7, before starting a national and overseas tour

Elvis ran for 2½ years in London's West End and gained the coveted *Evening Standard* "Best Musical of the Year" Award in 1978

Starting from Elvis Presley's early days as an unknown singer the production takes us through 25 years of his music — and with the aid of film, slides and a newscaster, depicts the happenings during these 25 years

The role of Elvis Presley will be played by three people Young Elvis, Middle Aged Elvis and a Mature Elvis who between them will sing over 100 of his most popular songs To find the three main characters Graeme Willington has auditioned over 700 hopefuls and although the role of Young Elvis has been narrowed

Vince Eager the Mature Elvis

down to a short list of three, the producer has been unable to find a suitable Middle Aged or Mature Elvis in Australia Prior to leaving for England to finalise negotiations Willington said, "I had hoped to have an all Australian cast but will now almost certainly have to use the two English leads to play the Middle and Mature Elvis's, however the other 28 members of the cast will be Australians. The costumes will be authentic copies of the clothes worn during the periods portrayed and Presley's stage costumes will be spectacular " The producer also stressed that this was not a concert but a $500,000 full length stage musical and no attempt had been made to use look alike singers "

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ACCIDENTAL DEATH OF AN ANARCHIST

police story fatal raptus

By Dario Fo

...g questioned in the office ...e chief Luigi Calabresi ...th floor of the building ...re the fall.

...st Pinelli was being ...in relation to the ...in the Milan ...Bank last week.

...kmates said that he ...y anarchist railway ...lan.

...d they had been ...Pinelli for some time ...t his leap was a clear ...ion of guilt.

...e of the seven police in the room at the time claimed that the window had only just been opened to let in some fresh air when Pinelli leapt to his feet, shouted 'This is the death of anarchy' and jumped to his death.

...in an ...ed in the courtyard.

Police today identified the body as being Guiseppe Pinelli, anarchist railway worker who

Special report — Pg 2

Directed by Brant McGregor
Designed by Staphan Curtis
Starring George Whaley with Robert Giltinan, Martin Harris, Deborah Kennedy, Paul Mason and Tony Taylor.

Bomb hoax MP named

— Page 3

24 PAGES TODAY • WEATHER: Warm, mainly sunny (Map P84). • LOTTERY: P84. • FINANCE: P80 • TV: P42

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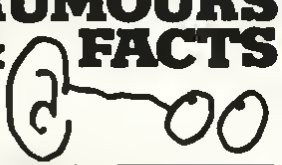


by Norman Kessell

Season's most felicitous casting must be playwright-actor **Stephen J** *(Benjamin Franklin)* **Spears** in the role of the testy, "fastest in the country", scriptwriter Nestor Snell in **David Williamson's** *Celluloid Heroes*, now in Adelaide (March 3-21) as the start of its national tour for the **Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust**. Of the original **Nimrod** cast, only **Kevin Smith** remains as the smooth Aboriginal actor Dick Birakool. Other newcomers are **Robert Alexander** as the producer, **Michael Carman** as the director, **Jennifer Claire** as the expatriate star, **Linda Cropper** as the ingenue, **Robin Bowring** as the camp male star and **Wayne Garrett** as the young assistant. Other dates in the 9½ weeks tour are Perth March 3-21, Brisbane, May 11-30, Newcastle, June 1-6 and Melbourne, June 8-27.

And talking of Heroes, what a compliment has been paid to TA's several programme issues, like the one on sale during the **Nimrod** season of the play, full of articles and pictures about the production and its personnel. When the show transferred to the **Theatre Royal**, behold! **Brian Nebenzahl's Playbill** programme had blossomed into a 36-page "Magazine for the Theatregoer", with articles by leading showbiz writers. I was associated with an earlier Playbill essay into magazine programming. This collapsed because it proved impossible to prevent the pages of theatrical news items published getting out of date. It will be interesting to see how this new and more timeless approach develops.

This month sees the opening of the **Trust's** long-delayed production of **Brian Clark's** controversial *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* at Sydney's **Theatre Royal** on March 25, starring **Robert Coleby**, the Trust's first choice for the lead role (see article page 18). Coleby's initial rejection of the role because he did not want to tour and the subsequent difficulty in finding a replacement, either here or overseas, caused cancellation of the first six weeks of the national tour planned to start in Brisbane. To compensate however, a three-weeks Brisbane season, at **Her Majesty's Theatre** from July 21, has been added to the end of the tour. Other itinerary dates are Newcastle April 27, Canberra May 4, Melbourne May 11, Perth June 15, Adelaide July 6. Supporting cast is **Annette Andre, Don Pascoe, Elaine Lee, David Foster, David Nettheim, Dorothy Alison, Philip Ross, Keith Lee, Leonore Smith** and **Fred Steele**.

The previously mentioned Queensland tour with **Leonard Teale** in the **Ron Haddrick** role in the revival of *The Gin Game* is now expected to open in Brisbane in May. Cairns, Rockhampton and Townsville will follow. Who will play the **Ruth Cracknell** role had not been decided at time of writing.

In furtherance of the **Trust's** plans for a city season and tour of the **Q Theatre's** big 1980 success, the rock musical *Paradise Regained* negotiations are now in hand for a May opening at the **Seymour Centre's York Theatre.**

Interlude. Reading *Robert Morley's Book of Bricks*, I liked the one dropped by a Cornish newspaper critic who wrote in a review of a play at Perranporth: "Mr Penrose gave a sharp twist to both his parts".

The 1981 **Festival of Sydney** is now history, but though comparatively low-keyed, it earned the applause of playgoers. They were particularly well-served. In the 26 days I saw 13 stage shows, from the superb *The Liberation of Skopje* to the lamentable *Kate Kelly's Roadshow*. And there were several others I missed. True, a few would have been on anyway, but it was good programming, nevertheless.

At one Sydney theatre during the festival — no names, no blacklist — the applause at interval and play's end seemed so disproportionate to the show's merit as to sound phony. A metallic sound made me suspect audience reaction was either being miked and magnified or else augmented by recorded applause. I hope I'm wrong. The electronic claque is already a curse upon radio and television. We certainly do not want it in theatre.

I, and I am sure many others, really would like to know more about the faceless assessors claimed to be reporting to the **Australia Council's Theatre Board** on the quality of our theatres. If not their names, at least their occupations and qualifications. The hitherto well-run ship at Sydney's **Marian Street Theatre** has been wrecked by a threat that its subsidy could be "phased out". This followed reports by the faceless few that "standards have declined", an evaluation totally at variance with professional critical appraisal and with audience response. Not least shameful of the whole sorry affair was the failure of the theatre's board of directors to stand behind its artistic director who had served it well for eight years.

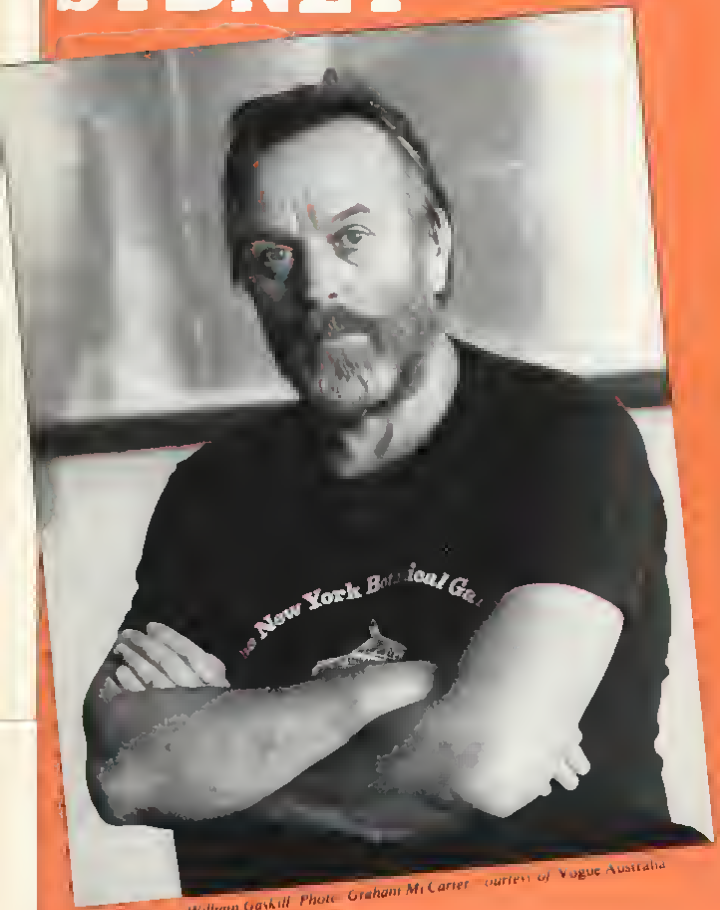
Spiraling costs of large-scale musicals are an understandable deterrent to local production. Few can afford the risks involved, for example, in a blockbuster like *Evita*. Word is that it is, in part, the huge costs to be faced that have deferred and probably debarred the talked-about Oz version of *Sweeney Todd*. The latest grapevine shout is about a possible local production of Broadway's newest hit, *Barnum* with **Reg Livermore** starring. I was therefore interested to note that at the end of January the American production was still $910,000 short of recouping its production costs of $1.547.467. It was, however, then making $40.000 a week profit at New York's **St James Theatre**, so by now it is no doubt safely in the money. But the point is that even with New York's vastly greater potential audience and larger theatres, that took nine months. See what I mean? That million and a half production costs incidentally included $610,378 for the physical staging, $119.031 to creative personnel, $258,873 rehearsal expenses and $119,709 in preliminary advertising. An Australian producer might escape some of that initial outlay, but he'd still have little change from, say, $1,000,000.

Ingrid Bergman's recently published and highly-readable autobiography instances some amusing goofs resulting from her onetime flawed command of English. Like that in *The Constant Wife* when instead of telling her husband "You are a liar, a cheat and a humbug", she shouted "You are a liar, a cheat and a hamburger". To her credit, she laughed as heartily as her audiences at such slips. When, in the same play, the husband asked as she was leaving "What shall I do about food?", instead of replying "Just give the cook her head and you'll be alright", she said "Just give the cook your head and you'll be all right".

SPOTLIGHT

DISCOVERING HAMLET IN SYDNEY

By Rex Cramphorn



Hamlet director William Gaskill. Photo: Graham McCarter courtesy of Vogue Australia

William Gaskill is in Australia to direct *Hamlet* for the Sydney Theatre Company. The performances will be given in the Drama Theatre of the Opera House, beginning at the end of March.

Mr Gaskill's distinguished career in England has included work for the Royal Court, the Royal Shakespeare Company, and the National Theatre. From 1965 to 1972 he was Artistic Director of the Royal Court. Some of his best-known productions have been of *The Recruiting Officer*, *Macbeth*, *The Three Sisters* and of Edward Bond's early plays *Saved*, *Early Morning*, *Lear*, and *The Sea*. With the Joint Stock Company he directed *The Speakers* and *Fanshen*. Most recently he has freelanced in Britain, Europe and America, directing such diverse works as *Madras House*, the Oedipus plays and *Cosi Fan Tutte*. He has worked in Australia once before, directing *Love's Labour's Lost* for the Old Tote Company in 1974.

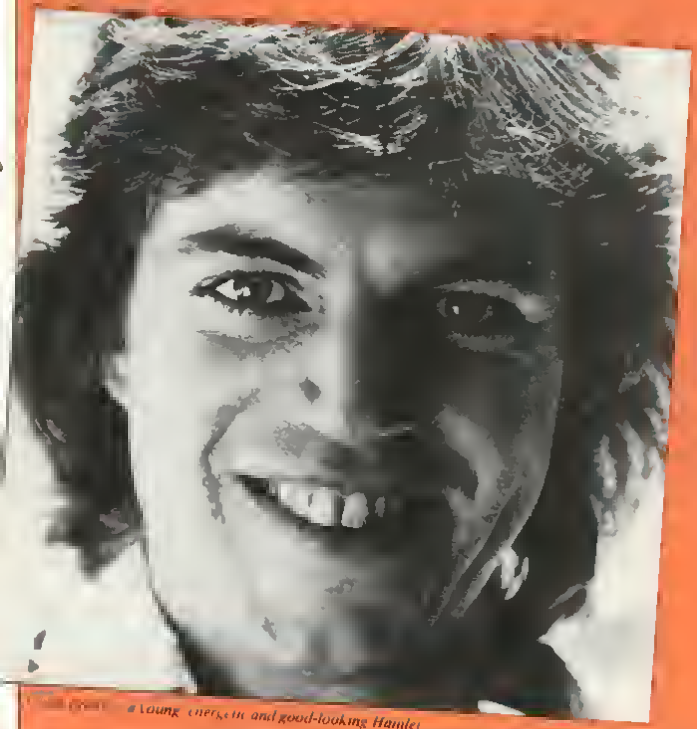
His casting includes Colin Friels as Hamlet, Noni Hazlehurst as Ophelia, Max Cullen as Claudius, Kate Fitzpatrick as Gertrude and Alexander Hay as Polonius. The production is designed by Hayden Griffin, with whom Mr Gaskill has worked a number of times (notably on *Madras House* and the Oedipus plays). This will be Mr Gaskill's first production of *Hamlet*.

Like most directors, Mr Gaskill speaks cautiously of a production which is, as yet, only in his (and his designer's) head. What appears on the Opera House stage at the end of March will be the result of the interaction of his present ideas with those of his actors over a five-week rehearsal period.

Nevertheless, in the nature of things, some aspects have to be fixed in advance. The stage of the Drama Theatre dictates the shape of the production. From the outset it is

relatively wide in proportion to its height, relatively shallow in proportion to its width and relatively unendowed with space in the wings and flies. Its "cinemascope" fame demands some manipulation of space and bodies, on the part of a director, in the interests of picture-making. Mr Gaskill points out that were he directing the play for a different space, he might not choose to emphasise this element so strongly.

The mechanics of wardrobe and set construction demand advance decisions on design. This work is already completed and the designer will arrive soon to supervise the making. The costumes are late nineteenth century in period but the setting will support action and atmosphere without suggesting any particular period. Mr Gaskill feels that a text like *Hamlet* needs to be presented in something near enough to modern dress to make it readily recognizable to an audience without, on the other hand, making elements which are in integral part of the action (like sword-fights) anachronistically jarring. For this purpose late Victorian dress is the most easily acceptable and he quotes the examples of Robin Phillips' Stratford Ontario productions and Sir Tyrone Guthrie's later productions as confirming this feeling. His own previous Australian production of Shakespeare was also dressed in this period.



Colin Friels: a young, energetic and good-looking Hamlet

Finally, the mechanics of casting demand commitment to a group of actors, selected by audition, with most of whom the director has not previously worked. The casting of Colin Friels as Hamlet indicates that the character at the centre of the play is likely to be young, energetic and good-looking and Mr Gaskill confirms that the Hamlet he has in mind is in no way neurotic or eccentric. In fact, the casting throughout indicates an intention to present the characters in a moderate light: for example, Mr Gaskill sees Claudius as randy but less than attractive (much as Hamlet describes him), Ophelia as no nymphomaniac, and the Ghost as visibly present and doing what its observers describe. In short, Mr Gaskill has cast actors who can easily embody a fairly straightforward literal reading of the text. In speaking of casting Kate Fitzpatrick as Gertrude he described the actress as a "national institution". I'm not sure what aspect of Gertrude's character he means to underline by this.

A relatively high proportion of any audience is seeing even as well-known a play as *Hamlet* for the first time. Mr Gaskill is concerned that his production should give a just and comprehensible view of the play to such an audience — he is not at pains to justify the play's "relevance" or to "sell" it with gimmicks. His version of the text will be "medium-sized" and "thinned" rather than cut — it will not last for "an eternity" but it will not be compressed. It will have two intervals. And although *Hamlet* was written for an audience which differed greatly from the one which will be seeing it in Sydney in 1981, Mr Gaskill is confident that the vigour of the play, the internal life of its symbols, is such that its meaning will be communicated without directorial intervention of any radical kind. The intuition that a classic text has an actual life, and that a production can do no more than support or hinder that life, is both an inspiration and a reassurance for a director. Perhaps the element which keeps *Hamlet* eternally fresh is its concentration on the inner life of its central character — while a play like *The Revenger's Tragedy* derives some of its meaning from its ethical and literary context (Elizabethan notions of revenge and revenge drama), *Hamlet* works out its own attitude to such questions before our eyes in the explicit deliberations of the central character — and the discovery of the nature of this inner life is the aim of the rehearsal process.

If Mr Gaskill is reticent about the way he "sees" character it is because he places his confidence in discovering it with the actor concerned. If he is reticent about the way he hopes to animate this classic text it is because he places his confidence in the discovery of the play's own life during rehearsal.

ELIZABETH ALEXANDER

— Actress turned director

by Cathy Peake

Elizabeth Alexander first chanced her hand as a director with Jean Genet's *The Maids* for the Melbourne Theatre Company last year.

It was such a success, that the show has been brought back for a return season upstairs at the Athenaeum.

"Genet wrote *The Maids* specifically to represent and explore people who are at odds with their identities. That's one of the main reasons why he cast the maids as men — it helped reinforce his sense of personal identity as a species of fiction. In all of his writing he is fascinated by the problem of what's real and what's false.

"At first I didn't want to do it. Then, the fact that these characters represented an alternative to those female stereotypes which turn up with such regularity in the theatre appealed to me.

"I thought it would be interesting to see women play characters which he had written for men. And I wanted to work with this particular cast.

"Actually I had been talking to John Sumner about directing for film. He's fascinated by film. And about a week later Tony Watts came up and said 'John wants to know whether you'd like to direct *The Maids*, because there's a space for a director there.'

"I nearly fell off my seat. I'd never even mentioned directing for theatre — not even by insinuation. I said, give me a couple of days to think about it, and then I decided it was what I wanted to do. I knew the play, I had played Clare in my amateur days.

"In retrospect, now, I'd like to have directed something else to begin with — something easier, like Noel Coward."

Elizabeth Alexander would like to do some more directing this year, and she has spoken to John Sumner about it. He said 'Bring me the play'. She thinks the opportunities for female directors are too limited, and that it is a pity that the few who are around are nearly all working in film. But there are other problems too, such as a widespread lack of confidence in the capabilities of a female director.

"I think the girls in *The Maids* were a bit nervous about working with me, though they haven't said so. I'd never directed anything before and I had only worked with them as an actor."

Asked why she thought *The Maids* was proving so popular with Melbourne audiences, she put it down to the fact that audiences like plays which are academic. "Genet is part of the established literary canon. He's a bit elitist. He'd hate to hear that, but he is.

"The next season is booked out again. I don't find it entertaining. I find it a trial to sit through, but I do find its convolutions and its claustrophobia fascinating.

"I found it difficult to direct, the emotions those characters go through are so alien, and I also had to make it as visually exciting as I could. That was an art in itself.

"The Maids is very taxing on the cast too. When our run first started it used to take one hour and seventy minutes to get through, but by the end of the season they had it down to eighty-three minutes. That was too fast. They were missing the moments when the audience could get relief, and so could they, and yet still be true to the text."

A play that Elizabeth Alexander would really like to direct is *Cahoot's Macbeth* a spoof on *Macbeth* by Tom Stoppard.

"It starts with a very short version of the original play — then an inspector walks on to the stage and recognizes Macbeth as someone who used to sell newspapers at the railway station, and Lady Macbeth as an ex-call girl. It's meant to bring the actors out of their roles. But Tom Stoppard wrote both *Cahoot's Macbeth* and *Dog's Hamlet* for a particular company. He said, "I don't want just anyone doing *Dog's Hamlet*", and *Cahoot's Macbeth* is supposed to be done with it. Thus there is a problem with the rights."

Elizabeth Alexander's future is mapped out until the end of April. On the ninth of February she will return to Sydney for a stint in the ABC TV series *Sporting Chance*. Then she will take the lead in a feature film, an opportunity which she sees as a bonus for the year.

TWO NEW VENTURES IN PERTH

By Donna Sadka

Tasmanian puppeteer Peter Wilson is a man for whom anything goes, in the sense that anything which helps make brighter, better images and visual statements in puppet theatre can only be good, regardless of whether it comes within the strict conventions of puppet theatre as Australians generally know it.

This innovative young man found on a Churchill Fellowship study tour in 1973 that in puppet oriented countries like Japan and Russia such things as life-size puppets, masks, live actors etc., were freely used and it gave him the confidence to put more of his own ideas into practise

A recent sample was the 15 ft. dragon he created for his Perth Festival production of "Faustus", an amazing creature controlled by pulleys which bore Mephistopheles out over the heads of the audience.

The Theatre Board of the Australia Council and the WA Arts Council have demonstrated their faith in Wilson's creativity by funding him to the tune of a combined $40,000 to establish in Perth a puppetry arts research team comprising Wilson himself as puppet master and director, Beverley Campbell-Jackson (design), and Cathryn Robinson (scripts) — but Team is the operative word as it is the way Wilson always prefers to work. They will also take on two W A apprentice puppeteers

Calling themselves "Spare Parts", the team will initiate a number of community activities through workshops for recreation groups, teachers and T I E teams

They emphasise their desire to present children's (puppet) theatre performances of a good proposal and are now involved in the Mount Lawley Children's Festival and the Fremantle Arts Centre's summer programme in May. They are also preparing a special performance for primary schools as well as a one man show by Wilson with a guest director

Spare Parts' main problem at time-of-writing is the lack of permanent quarters where they can set up their own work-rooms, studio, and exhibitions but the Fremantle City Council is co-operating and the outlook is good

Also in Perth the Health Education Unity of the W A Department of Health is involving itself in the International Year Of the Disabled with the production of *Wings*, Arthur Kopit's successful Broadway play about the nightmare problems of a woman stricken with aphasia as a result of a stroke. The central role of the former aviatrice is played by professional actresss Jenny McNae

(Aphasia is the loss of the ability to comprehend or communicate while remaining to all intents and purposes an operable human being)

The play's director, Ken Campbell-Dobbie, believes that "theatre is a therapeutic experience which deals with a lot of things we don't actually confront in our own lives. It helps us, participants and audiences, to learn to accept others and ourselves."

Earlier this year the Unit presented a reading of an original playscript by a Perth quadriplegic which, while obviously the work of a novice writer, gave some insight into the frustrations of the severely physically handicapped

Dobbie has been appointed drama officer by the Department as part of an experimental project set up to examine all kinds of drama activities in the community where the imagination is used to provide a stimulus. There is an ongoing programme being planned for the rest of this year

Chief Health Education Officer, Colm O'Doherty, said that drama is now being used extensively in education and it followed logically that it could be used equally beneficially in health education

ITI

Future Theatre Happenings Abroad

6th INTERNATIONAL TRI-ANNUAL EXHIBITION OF THEATRE SCENOGRAPHY AND COSTUME DESIGN.
All countries who are members of the ITI, OISTT, and AIAP have the right to participate. Further particulars from the Australian ITI Centre, Zmaj Jovina 22/ I, Sterijino Pozorje 21000, Novi Sad, Yugoslavia, May 1981.

NORTH AMERICAN TRAINING TECHNIQUES IN THEATRE.
This colloquy will be held under the patronage of the English speaking Canadian ITI, followed by the International Festival of Toronto, 12-19 May 1981.

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL
A ten-day festival of women's theatre arts and crafts will be held at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY. The programme includes performances by women's theatres and ensembles one-woman shows, and various workshops. Write for more information to WITAF, 6205 Cromwell Drive, Washington, DC 20016. The festival will be held 10-28 June 1981

2ND COPENHAGEN INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL
This festival has been arranged following the enormous success of the Amsterdam "Festival of Fools/Theatre des Nations". Copenhagen has invited interested Australian companies to participate. Write to: Artistic Director: Trevor Davies, Copenhagen International Theatre Festival, Havnegade 35 st. 1., 1055 Copenhagen K., Denmark. 27 June to 25 July.

19TH ITI STATUTORY CONGRESS IN MADRID.
Theme: Responsibility of theatre towards humanity. 31 May — 6 June, 1981.

AUBREY MELLOR

— the latest Artistic Director at Nimrod

interviewed by Shelley Neller

"In this business, you wake up one morning and realise you're not a genius — and you relax."

Aubrey Mellor was indulging in an entertaining interlude of self-satirization As he discussed his new role as co-artistic director of the Nimrod Theatre, he looked decidedly relaxed His crisply-pressed working clothes had a battered charm quite separate from his personal appeal as he reflected on his first foray into the director's world

"When I was younger, I thought I knew everything I was one of those terrible fascist young people who has a vision and expects everyone to follow it I really only went to NIDA. ."

As a formality?

"No To get introductions." He laughed "When I got there, I realised how much I didn't know and thought I'd better start learning"

One of the things he grew to value through ten years at NIDA as a tutor in acting and a director was the role of the actor He is keen to develop this at the Nimrod

A more mellow and moderate person these days, Mellor talked about all aspects of theatre in psychological or "people" terms He mentioned the great need for director-actor empathy, said his love of people was his basic guiding force and believed that the great plays were about people, not issues

"Nimrod was one of the first companies to recognise actors as intelligent beings Rehearsals are freer here, which the actors like Now we're at the point where we'd like to form a company of actors and allow them to have more say. I think they need to contribute more to Nimrod's direction We've chosen six definites so far and are looking for two, possibly four more

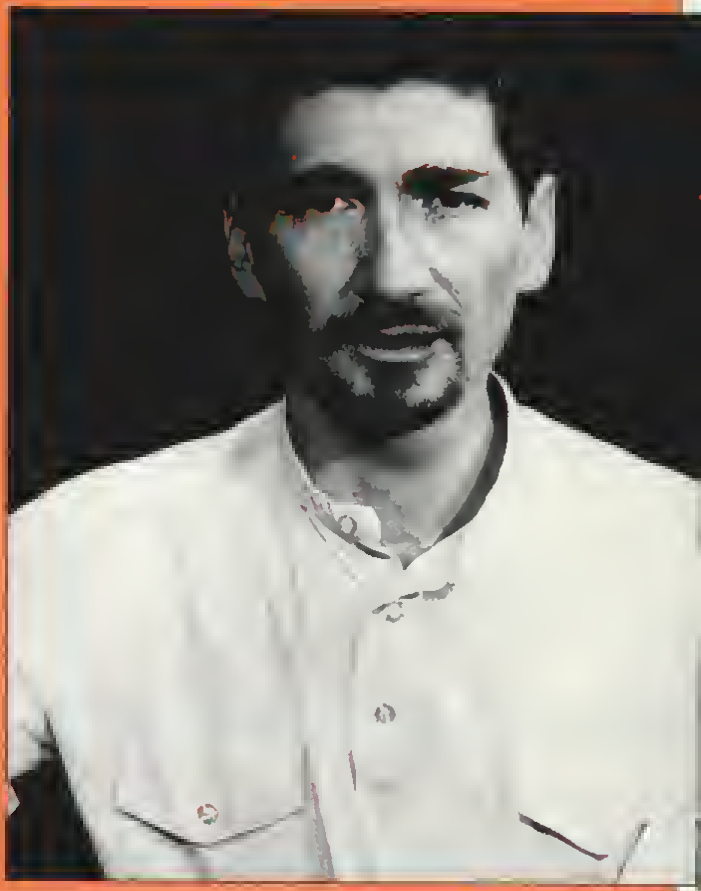
"You need the actors before you can choose the plays. Some companies depend more on big names We'd like to have versatile actors who are more amorphous, wanting to progress individually"

Actors usually felt they started behind the eight-ball when it came to the production, he said. His idea is to assemble the players in the early stages to liaise with the designer and producer, rather than belatedly informing them of all the decisions as a kind of necessary afterthought

This attitude is a significant progression from his approach in the late sixties when "the production was everything and whatever the playwright was trying to say was irrelevant A lot of directors then wanted a who weren't too bright They didn't want them asking too many questions which they might not be able to answer Now they crave intelligent actors and encourage them to ask as many questions as they like"

At Nimrod, Mellor is being careful to avoid creating a company which has "a particular style that gets a bit exclusive Nimrod has always managed to be contemporary to talk to today's audience without being exclusive I'd like to help perpetuate that image" With this in mind, the programme for 1981 is being formulated

"We're looking for a very different



play — like one of the Jacobean texts because they widen our actors so much; they demand that the actors strive in their performance."

Nimrod is also considering a rather large classic with modern relevance (Shakespeare or Brecht), an Australian play written and directed by a woman and a choice of contemporary Czech plays by Vaclav Havel (who is currently in prison). The plays are explorations of relationships, our positions within society and the hypocrisy and fear associated with freedom of speech in that country.

Amid all this decision-making Mellor has studiously worked on an Australian translation of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* (which opens this month) because he felt that the English and American translations were "absolutely inadequate" for this country's audiences. They especially lacked colloquialisms.

This formidable task (Mellor speaks no Russian) painstakingly undertaken during the past six months with help from friends, probably says more about the director than he is modestly or moderately likely to volunteer. He pushes gently for perfection in his productions — and if that involves an arduous translation in order to extract the maximum from the actors, then it must be done.

"It's a little dangerous, but I feel fairly secure in it because I've directed six other Chekhov plays," he said.

The people at Nimrod obviously feel fairly secure about Mellor, too. The theatre is in transition and you can feel the anticipatory buzz amongst the staff.

After all, Mellor's association with the place goes back to its inception when John Bell asked him to be the production manager.

"But I wanted to learn more about direction and how actors work. I feel I've done my apprenticeship now and I passionately want to say a few things to a public audience. With students, the audience is fairly closed."

But it had suited him to decline tempting offers for eight years because he was committed to teaching.

"You get interested in the actors and pushing them through. I've spent more time thinking about other people's careers than my own."

The timing of the Nimrod offer was obviously right because Mellor who is married with a one-year old son, took a drop in salary to join the theatre.

He is most frank about his abilities as a director when he drops the satirical line about his past and discusses his general ambitions.

"I would love to direct a very visual, emotional musical. But I know myself well enough to say I'm much better at the psychological plays with complex webs of human beings."

Mellor sounds so well-adjusted and equible, one can't imagine him heatedly disagreeing with an actor during rehearsal, but neither does he seem the type who is easily compromised.

"There's always another view. I agree with Chekhov that there are no heroes and villains. If an actor is hung up on a problem, I try to find out the cause behind it — that's the solution. And I can never get excited over a detail.

"But my wife criticizes me for not telling actors when they're good. I take the attitude that everything they do is good and if it's not, I'll soon tell them."

THE **ELLIS** COLUMN

Heroes of Truth and Celluloid Characters

Scene *The alley outside the Stables Theatre A warm night, Marinos stands pensively smoking Enter Whitlam*

WHITLAM *I'm just waiting for my son Or should I say my lawyer (Pause) At what point, do you think I should walk out?*

MARINOS *(with oily Adriatic charm) I don't know, there are so many*

WHITLAM *I shall choose my moment*
(pause)

MARINOS *Your daughter-in-law Pip Coleman and I were at school together At Wagga High (pause) I used to serve her milkshakes in the Paragon Cafe*

WHITLAM *May I say how pleased I am by how much your English has improved*

In *Celluloid Heroes* the Ellis character was hurled off the set, spilling his vitamin pills and snarling over his contract in the first twenty minutes In actuality it took two whole weeks of the real Ellis's surly carping presence — "like," said one of the actors, "an intellectual toothache" before the actors, to evict him, went on strike The play involved, his own venomous, anti-Ellis doomsday chronicle *A Very Good Year*, starred Terry Bader as Ellis, Biggles and Francis James, and John Clayton as Les A Murray, E G Whitlam and Jeeves, many of whom were present on opening night the night John Lennon was murdered and Marinos, in his only act of stark lunacy in the whole season, played "Imagine" has the hot and feral audience came sobbing down the steps into a drabber aftertime

It had not gone well Whitlam shot off into the darkness with Murray shouting after him "So you think *you've* got troubles" Francis James eyed his old sub-editor of *The Anglican Yearbook* and said, "Tell me frankly Ellis, are you a genius?' I do believe I have my doubts" Harry Kippax, whom Ellis had intemperately called an idiot to his face some weeks before left swiftly with the glittering phrase "a very bad play" throbbing under his narrow, mournful, foot-long forehead Ellis, the fool, took three days to realise he had blown it again

WHITLAM *Adieu, adieu, remember me (begins to fade out)*

ELKIN *Remember thee? Ay thou poor ghost Well dash it, how could I forget? Er, Jeeves?*

WHITLAM *(snapping back into vision) Yes sir?*

ELKIN *You've never really .. liked me, have you?*

WHITLAM. *(with great finality) No sir I've always regarded you as a pushy little fellow (fades quickly)*

He returned moodily, with the beautiful girl defamed in his own play ("Not so much a play", she said to his entire delight, "as foreplay"), to Williamson's defamation of him at the Nimrod, sourly hugging Robin Ramsay yet again in the foyer afterwards "He adequately impersonates my strange power over women," he explained, without conviction, to those few still amazed around them Asked if he found the portrait at all accurate he said "Utterly, except I don't smoke" But he was not happy. Was this filthy, lying, misshapen lecher really himself? He decided it had to be since Williamson could not tell a lie Not because he was fundamentally honest, but because he was utterly unimaginative What an image to bequeath to posterity

"I'm immortalising you" said Dickens, "the character is called Uriah Heep"

"Oh Gaw bless you Mr Dickens, arr"

Ellis bought the girl another vodka She looked at him coolly, remembering his gift that afternoon of a bunch of roses, much like the flowers proferred by Nestor Snell to the gullible virgin he then exploited and abandoned in the play She thereafter swelled the chastity quotient in their second run holiday romance and flew back randy to her lover in New York One I owe Williamson, thought Ellis, as the plane climbed up into the endless blue But perhaps it was already too late What with Gilly Coote's and Jay Bland's uproarious teleplays and his own forthcoming *The Nostradamus Kid* he was in actual grave danger of

becoming a genre — a sort of middle class Norman Wisdom, held in general contempt henceforth down ten centuries This was not good In his own mind he was a creature of cool and calm and dignity, like Gore Vidal or David Williamson, dammit Why was he not seen that way?

Suspecting the answer, Ellis at New Year resolved through his shudders to purchase a second shirt, and seek, moreover, the address of a laundromat It would not be easy, but he was determined to try

What was the etiquette, he wondered, as he watched through the little round window the ink from his pen spread over his new white shirt, of portraying people on stage? To do it with truth, he suspected, or not at all. Whitlam, described in *A Very Good Year* as a big, haughty turd, had, after autographing a book "to Bob Ellis, embryo script-writer", called it a good script The girl described in the text as a murderess had gone off with the author The other girl, characterised as a plaintive suicidal whinger, had recommended it heartily to her friends Les Murray, on the other hand, although his character was by far the most liked, hated his occasional rudeness, and demanded and got from his old friend Ellis, substantial changes Francis James, characterised as a liar, invited Ellis to lunch

W C FIELDS *(on his deathbed) And to the underprivileged of this great nation I leave two million dollars (pause) Two million dollars (pause) On second thoughts, fuck 'em*

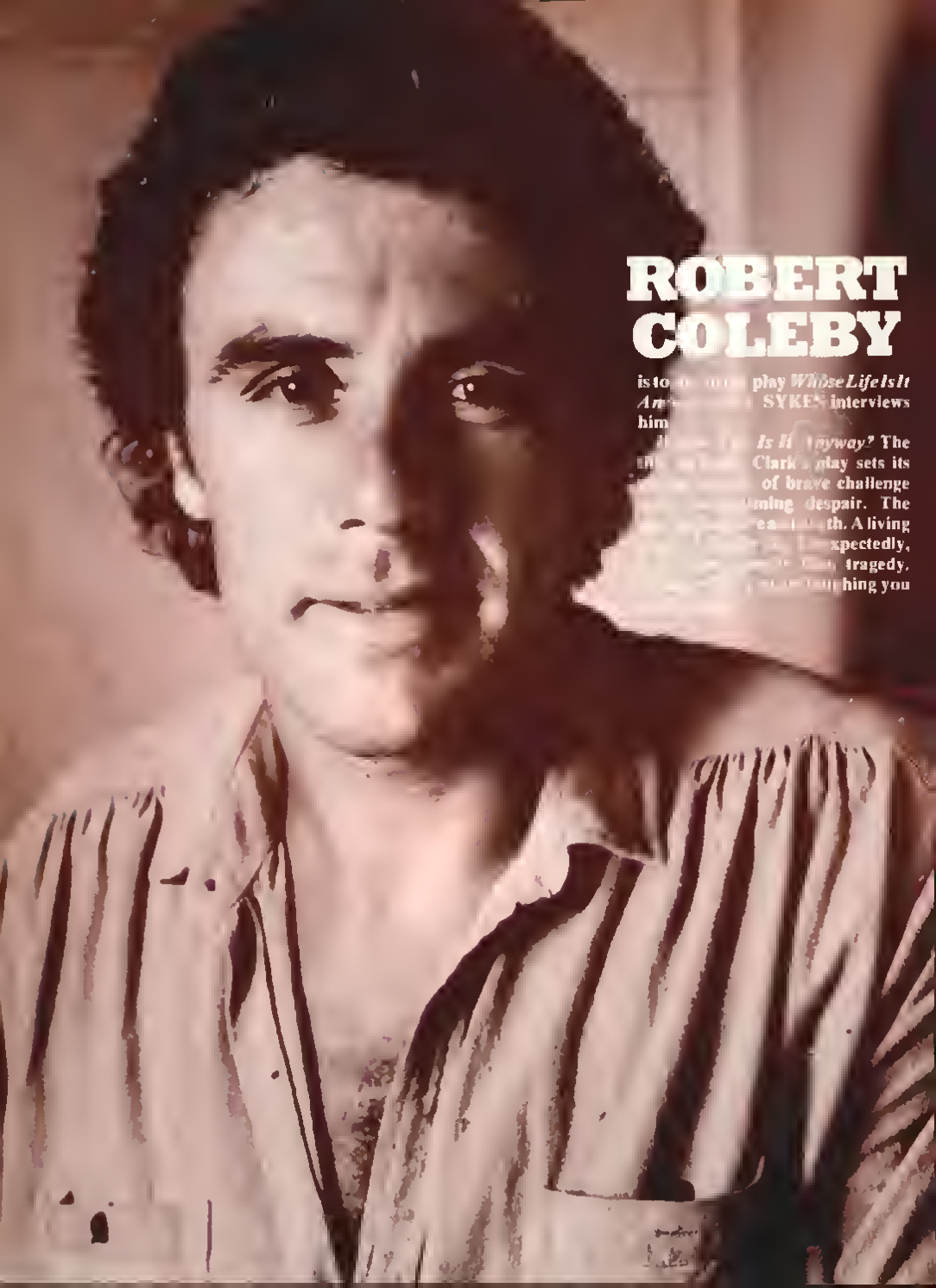
Noyce and Ellis discussed these things in the parking lot on the opening night of *Celluloid Heroes* Williamson, a great writer they both agreed, somehow left no scars They turned to his wife and advised her on how he could rectify this Make the characters more real, they said, give them histories Have them remember the past, like in *A Very Good Year* It fell on beautiful, cool, deaf ears Williamson, she revealed, now believed a character was not what he said but what he did A wee bit fundamentalist this, thought Ellis A seventy year old character in *Travelling North*, for instance, with no memories of the First or Second World War Not only fundamentalist, but wrong

ELLIS *(two weeks later to Whitlam) I suppose you're never speaking to me again*

WHITLAM *Ah no, I'm afraid I'll* have *to*

Still, he must have something, this tall, shy, presidential windcock, looking all that way down, as from a grandstand, at the mere human race He knew, like Ayckbourn and Neil Simon, the necessary minimums. More power to his elbow No, on second thoughts, fuck him No, on third thoughts

"I think what annoys me about Williamson's characters" said Ellis to Noyce, "is that they have no self-awareness, no self-distaste, the way my characters have" "That's why your characters are undramatic", said Noyce Ellis cursed his impertinence The night raged on It was the Nimrod's tenth anniversary, with a hundred actors in their original costumes, drunk as lords The Emperor's old clothes, said Ellis bitterly of John Bell He was getting bitter in his middle age Soon, if he was not careful, he would be writing a column for *Theatre Australia*



ROBERT COLEBY

is to [illegible] play *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* SYKES interviews him [illegible]

Is It Anyway? The [illegible] Clark's play sets its [illegible] of brave challenge [illegible] ming despair. The [illegible] ea[illegible]th. A living [illegible] xpectedly, [illegible] tragedy. [illegible] hing you

Ken Harrison, the central character, has been injured in a car accident. His quick mind is unaffected, but for the rest of his life his head will be attached to a body that he cannot move. The brittle humour with which he faces the situation hardens to a determination to end his artificial existence, prolonged only by constant medical care. It's easier decided than done the ethical, medical, moral and instinctive arguments against it shape the drama of the play.

Whose Life is it Anyway? has had enormous success in England, where Tom Conti played Ken Harrison in the first production in 1978. In America, the paralysed patient suffered a curious sex change — dramatically speaking — to turn the play into a star vehicle for Mary Tyler Moore. Lucy Arnaz and her husband Laurence Luckenbill took it on tour and shared the central role, week about. Neither venture was as successful as the promoters hoped.

Now Australia is getting its own production with Robert Coleby in the pivotal role. The Elizabethan Theatre Trust is presenting *Whose Life is it Anyway?* in a five-month tour which begins in Sydney on March 26 and goes on to Newcastle, Canberra, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide and Brisbane.

Brian Hewitt-Jones, who directed the English touring production, was brought to Australia to direct the play here with a cast that includes Annette Andre, Dorothy Alison, Elaine Lee, Don Pascoe and David Nettheim. Set design follows the original English setting by Alan Tagg.

Even before he began rehearsals, Robert Coleby was researching this challenging role, which demands that he hold the attention of audiences in big commercial theatres (such as the Theatre Royal in Sydney, the Comedy in Melbourne) from a supine position, immobile in a hospital bed. Coleby sought the help of a 23-year-old man in a Sydney hospital, a quadriplegic who appeared to have come to terms with the fact that he would be paralysed from the neck down for the rest of his life. The actor explained that he was in a play and offered it to the patient to read, though in retrospect was somewhat relieved that the offer was refused.

"He said that everyone in his situation goes through a stage when they want to die, but they get over that. He has been engaged before the car accident, and he and his fiancee had decided to go ahead with their lives as they were." (Unlike Ken Harrison of the play, who asked his fiancee to stay away. "Better that than a lifetime's sacrifice... I told her to go to release her, I hope, from the guilt she would feel if she did what she really wanted to do.")

In the real-life situation, Coleby was shocked into understanding just how total a quadriplegic's helplessness can be. Faced by a casually dressed young man in a wheelchair, he forgot that those limbs underneath the jeans, open-necked shirt and sneakers couldn't move of their own accord any more. "A nurse asked the patient if he would like a pillow to rest his arms on. he said he would, and she brought it. Then she had to pick up his arms and put them on the pillow..." Coleby gives a rag-doll impression of the scene, and explains how he found himself trying to keep his normal gestural style of talking in check because it seemed some kind of insult to the other man's immobility.

Coleby learned about the difficulty a quadriplegic has in breathing. "They breath from their necks. But there is a certain amount of theatrical licence in the play, and I'm not sure at this stage quite how far I shall take the shallow breathing."

In reading the play, the strongest impression you get is the enormous energy of the motionless patient, words that defy his situation and make the role an exciting one. "I find it a very projectable part. More than most," says Coleby. "The man is very intelligent, he expresses himself well and his mind races at such a speed that his forcefulness comes through in the writing."

Physically, the role offers a challenge that is the direct opposite of the activity — or lack of it — on stage. "To be able to project and to relax a body to a state of stillness without tension... I am doing quite heavy workouts to be fit for it."

Robert Coleby is best known in Australia through his television roles. A 33-year-old Englishman, he has lived in Australia since 1975, occupied by *The Young Doctors* and *Patrol Boat*. *Time Lapse* and *The Plummer* amongst a variety of credits. Most recent was *The Levkas Man* which begins its TV run in March. It is not that he has pursued a television career, he says. Just that it happened that way. It was, after all, a stage role that brought him out here — the title role in Chekov's *Ivanov* for the Old Tote — and he says he doesn't want to lose the art of stage performance.

"I wanted to get back to the theatre because too much television is bad. It is not so much the medium, but the way you are made to perform out of sequence. *Levkas Man*, for example, has a time span of only six hours, but we were dotting about all over the place. This stops you building up a performance, and you learn tricks. You can't help it. You try to wind yourself up into an emotional state for a certain scene, but there are times when you have to create it purely technically. If you keep repeating it for television — that sort of system — you get out of feeling it. You know what will work and what you can get away with. The theatre brings back that sense of reality. It is also a pleasure to work with an immediate audience reaction."

Coleby's return to the theatre started with a small step last year: a one-act play in the lunchtime series at the AMP Theatrette. He was then offered the lead in *Whose Life is it Anyway?* And turned it down! "I always thought it was a good role. I always appreciated it was a difficult role — though if there is no challenge in a role you might as well not do it."

What put Coleby off was the touring. His wife and their two children always travel with him — even to Greece for location work on *The Levkas Man* — and the time suggested seemed inconvenient for them. The Elizabethan Theatre Trust was forced to look elsewhere, first in Australia and then overseas. Richard Chamberlain, Derek Jacobi and George Hamilton were considered. The delay on the $1 million production was putting it in danger. Coleby was approached again. This time he accepted, thereby getting his biggest acting challenge for years.

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CRISIS IN CONFIDENCE

RSC trained director, and founder of the first women's theatre company, SUSAN TODD, spent five weeks at Nimrod at the end of last year conducting their Women Director's Workshop. While in Australia she gave the following talk at the State Theatre Co of SA's public forum.

I think it's possible to discern a crisis of confidence, a lack of clear direction, in a good deal of current theatre. I'm aware of the fact that the observations I want to make spring very much from my deep involvement in my own culture. They may be either irrelevant to Australia's, notwithstanding or superficial so far as they are about what I've seen here.

These reservations notwithstanding, leaving England and coming here to work for a brief period has in some way that I don't understand sharpened my sense of the strengths and weaknesses of current English language theatre; has made me feel afresh its possibilities, and the degree to which theatre is needed. Needed for the heightened experiences of shared illumination, communality, and challenge, flowing between theatre practitioners and audiences, which only theatre of all the cultural goods on offer I think, can give.

I want first to talk about money. Not so much who pays, but how the relationship between funding systems and the production of theatre contributes to serious losses of confidence in doing the work. The relation is a complex one. Money is directed by the state toward the production of theatre, apparently on the basis that the state wishes, on a mandate of some indefinite kind from the people, to affirm and foster theatre as part of its servicing of society's needs.

But few people at state level are sure enough about that themselves, to really maintain the principle (especially in the face of opposition) that society does need art in the same way it needs hospitals or transport. So the basis on which money is directed to theatre is never quite firm. It shifts and slides, sometimes appearing as the free direction of funds without censorship or constraint as a provision for social need, but at other times appearing as a principle closer to a "return on investment" one.

A specific quantity or quality of goods seems to be demanded, as the visible return for and justification of expenditure. There are all kinds of reasons for that shift in principle, among them economic hard times, and political hard lines. The result for the workers in the field is confusion. Just as those individuals responsible for the direction of funds at state level find themselves on shifting ground, so do working artists. No-one can either quite accept, or quite refuse a "return on investment" principle, though it very often, to add to the confusion, covertly underlies negotiation. The relationship between funding bodies and theatres is thus fraught with unease in the crucial area of money.

That unease is further complicated by the often covert and multiple aspirations and expectations channelled toward theatre, and symbolised by the provision of money. Especially in the context of the local state, theatres often carry a great weight of civic investment of a non-financial kind. Theatre products are inarticulately perceived as a "proof" of civic endeavour. Or as an "index" of national intelligence. The very buildings, costly and magnificent, are a source of local pride, their construction proof of advancing prosperity, and of the local state's care for things spiritual.

So working artists in theatre are caught in a contradiction they individually cannot resolve, and for which they are not responsible. They find themselves on the receiving end of often unstated, but large, civic aspirations, and resentment when they fail to fulfil them. And they are caught up in the confusions that gather around the basis of funding.

The performer working on the stage before an audience knows very well the core of the relationship there, and the precise nature of the communication made. She/he stands not in a "return on investment" relationship at that point, but in what might be called a "gift" relationship to the audience. No matter what the cost of the production, or how much or little the seat prices are, that ancient relation remains; central, inviolable, and totally vulnerable. In their work at the point of presentation, to which all the care of preparation tends, performers experience the daily and appalling pain of rejection, and sometimes the pleasure of acceptance, of their "gift".

The expectation of a return on investment cannot be reconciled with this unique understanding that performers and audiences establish. Working artists make attempts to reply to criticism on the "return on investment" basis, but without conviction since they know in reality - their connection to the audience is quite other. They lack the confidence to speak, or fight for, their knowledge, perhaps fearing to be thought playful and unwordly if they clearly say that their product cannot be measured by

money. Or perhaps they are fearful of seeming to differentiate themselves from the mass of people whose relationship to what they produce is very different, often alienated in the extreme.

Working artists are themselves aware that public funding can seem obscurely to mean that the work done belongs not to the makers or to the actual audiences, but to everyone *because* everyone pays taxes, and without individual choice So criticism, even of the most undermining and damaging kind, must be accepted from everyone, including that of professionals who presume to speak for the mass, and actually are demanding the quantity or quality they individually require

I thought the Alan Roberts piece on STC *(The Advertiser*, November 1980) interesting in this respect, though more in another It seemed to me to do terrible damage to the relationship between a theatre and its audience or its critics to set up an atmosphere of total warfare between the two. That kind of criticism denies I think all relationship or connection, and treats theatre as just another commodity to be either consumed or thrown aside, according to the whim of appetite, like ice-cream

People who work in theatre are accustomed to criticism to the rejection of the "gift" And nobody minds it, so long as the vital connection, relationship, between theatre and its potential or actuall audience is acknowledged, and not obliterated Of course the relationship is vulnerable on both sides, disappointment with a piece of theatre as audience or critic is painful, as is rejection for the performer. But there needs to be a way of rejecting the "gift" with as much grace and skill as it takes to offer it. A two-way relationship does exist, even if it is difficult and it needs to be seen for what it is, human and rather messy, not modelled on the analogy of consumer and commodity.

Criticism or come to that praise needs to be offered within a framework of a consciousness of mutuality then, between practitioners and audiences When I tried to think about what strengths the working artist in theatre might be able to set against the difficulties of relating to funding and the state, this acknowledgement seemed crucial I think that a really strong, resilient, and critical commitment to the society and its whole culture is what produces exciting theatre, and is its greatest strength. For the writers and makers of theatre, an awareness of the society's growing points, a positive engagement with its latent conflicts, is what makes a theatre that will have the quality of expression of lived experience.

The most exciting plays in Britain over the last ten years have had these qualities, Edgar's *Destiny*, Hare's *Fanshen*, Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine* or *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* and a lot of Howard Brenton's work. All have contained a quick, alert responsiveness to what was happening currently, which made their audiences

sit on the edge of their seats, knowing themselves to be in the presence of something absolutely alive, and often subversive, going on on the stage.

These writers were responding to, and challenging aspects of our contemporary experience of society, and they spoke to us in the present tense They are, in the best sense, "in touch", often indeed more so than either journalism or current forms of orthodox political expression *Destiny* for instance imparted a much fuller and more subtle emotional and political substance to the question of racism in England than any of the political groupings which sought an anlysis of that phenomenon could do.

Our strengths as makers of theatre may lie in a full engagement with our own cultures. But what happens in practice very often is that theatre makers retreat into a ghetto, and shut themselves off behind defensive walls as their only means of coping with the pains of rejection by audiences or critics, of being treated as commodity, and the confusion produced by complicated relations to the state. Some few, famous enough, and of sufficiently independent mind like Peter Brook, sidestep the issues by cutting off relation to state funding systems, and insisting on the very best conditions to produce the work

When you're in the ghetto as a maker of theatre, the results are fatal to theatre's life. You are out of engagement, and thus your major source of strength is lost. One of the aspects of that ghettoising process that concerns me is that it produces a condition of self-generating fear of the new, of changes in the social order which require an aesthetic response, of all critical new notions

It is at this point that the woman question as it affects theatre is relevant The Women's Liberation Movement, now more than ten years old, implicitly generates a sharp critique of all existing social institutions, including cultural ones like theatre, where important images of women are made, are forges

Women working to enter the field of theatrical representation as makers and controllers of images as well as the more traditional role of interpreters, find the men within it often more afraid of the threat we offer, than excited by the possibility we present of a much fuller and richer representation of the world We can, and do, as women work on their guilt, and insist they "should" be fair and have women working beside them at all levels. But the issue is not in the end accessible to this kind of civil rights approach. It requires men to feel, perceive, and understand in their bones what our absence from positions of control means. And to experience that absence as strange, as the anachronism that it is.

Yet I fear that this imagined condition, which would bespeak a free and open relationship between those working within theatre and the great social movements outside it, would require in turn a much greater confidence than now exists in our theatres

WOMEN DIRECTORS' WORKSHOP

Late last year Nimrod ran a Workshop for Women Directors. CHRIS WESTWOOD reports:

If theatre, as Susan Todd suggested at her public forum for the State Theatre Company of SA, is in a state of crisis at present, it must look to growing points in western culture. Feminism is that growing point. To be afraid of feminism is to be afraid of new ideas, of analyses different from those of the ruling group (men). To be threatened by feminism is to be threatened at the loss of exclusive male power. It is also important to remember that "separatism" is a temporary and necessary process to develop new analyses, and is quite a different thing from "supremacism" (a term recently coined — defensively — by men), which has little following amongst feminists.

So what might women have to offer as theatre directors? Perhaps this question is best answered by reversing "men" for "women". What if nearly all plays in Australian theatre were written by women, directed by women, designed by women, with women in the best roles? Would you not perhaps feel that you were getting rather a skewed view of the world? Would men then feel as frustrated, resentful, stunted as many women feel now?

The Workshop really began when, some nine months before the scheduled starting date, John Bell and I wrote to about 30 theatres seeking their response to the idea and the possibility of placing the participants with them. Most were enthusiastic or supportive, some thought it unnecessary, some didn't reply at all. Closer to the time, we advertised and received over 60 excellent applications from stage managers, performers, film-makers, amateur theatre directors, teachers, writers and social workers.

It was considered important that those selected for the course should not only be outstanding in potential, but be markedly different from each other in interests, experience and styles, for several reasons. First, we didn't want to flood the limited directing market with ten new directors, who all wanted to work in the same kind of theatre. Second, five weeks is a very short time to learn skills/craft, and places the person running the course under unnecessarily great pressure.

Those finally selected were very different: Gillian Armstrong, Beverly Blankenship, Camila Blunden, Margaret Davis, Chris Johnson, Chrissie Koltai, Jude Kuring, Fay Mokotow, Jane Oehr and Jacqy Phillips. Chris Johnson, for example, has a quietly penetrating intellectual curiosity which leads her to images. Chrissie Koltai, on the other hand, appears to begin with striking and immediate images which lead her *into* an examination of ideas. Gillian Armstrong's experience with a large budget production and subsequent scrutiny by the press and feminists on *My Brilliant Career* contributed greatly to the "how to handle" discussions. Beverly's experience in directing herself in Germany and her interest in Brecht added something different again. Jane Oehr's interest in ethnic and political ensemble work, and Camila's experience with the Women's Theatre Group in Canberra further widened the possibilities of ideas and skills "exchange". All of the participants had different notions of where they might direct in theatre: main house subsidised, TIE, alternative theatre, community theatre, commercial, or youth theatre.

Victoria Roberts, Women and Theatre No. 2

The formal structure of the course was in two parts: work on Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine* (contemporary) and Thomas Middleton's *Women Beware Women* (a Jacobean classic). Four lines of approach were taken: the craft process of directing, the role and responsibilities of a director, the implications and ramifications of being a *woman* director and using the Workshop group itself as a learning vehicle (examining *its* processes to understand aspects of the directorial role).

Comments by the group on the third aspect are interesting: "The group considered the pressure women feel from without and within to prove themselves, particularly in a position involving a degree of control and authority. We discussed the traps of trying to be either a "super-woman" or an "honorary man" . the problems of female stereotypes: either the "helpless female", the mother, the tough career-minded feminist, the mannish businesswoman.

Susan Todd raised the question of certain pitfalls which may be associated with women as directors: a tendency to "mother" the actors and the production, to be self-exploitive in an effort to cope with every job single-handedly, to internalise feelings of failure, to back away from conflict and angry confrontations, falling into the more familiar role as mediator and comforter.

The Workshop also considered the positive aspects of certain abilities often seen as "female": the ability to set up and maintain an emotional balance in a group, the ability to recognise and be sensitive to needs and nuances of feeling in a group, the ability to listen and be patient in times of stress."

For my own part, I am very pleased that Margaret Davis has been appointed Assistant Director at the State Theatre Company of SA, that Jacqy Phillips is currently directing a community theatre play in Bordertown, that Jude Kuring is working in the Women and Theatre Project, that Fay Mokotow is to direct *Roses In Due Season* for Nimrod's Downstairs Theatre in March, that Chris Johnson has been appointed Trainee Director at Nimrod, and the others have plans in the pipeline. I think Nimrod has changed a great deal, and if the Workshop were to be an isolated event, I'd be very disappointed.

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INTERNATIONAL

U.K.

Adultery done justice

by Irving Wardle

Amid a crescendo of warnings and gruesome evidence that the old country is falling to bits, nothing has shaken the British theatre's perennial obsession with the marital plight of the middle-aged property-owner. Sneer if you like, but the fact is that this raddled old subject continues to yield first class plays, two of which got the New Year off to a flying start.

Peter Nichols' *Passion Play*, a full-scale RSC production at the Aldwych, is the more ambitious of the pair, despite thematic appearances to the contrary. Adultery may be the most overworked theme in Western drama, but few plays do justice to it for the obvious reason that what goes on in the secrecy of the partners' heads is far more dramatic than anything they say, or indeed do, to one another. Nichols has observed this familiar obstacle and found a brilliant way around it.

James and Eleanor are a blamelessly domesticated couple who have seen their children off the premises and now have the house and the rest of their lives to themselves. He restores paintings, she sings in a choir, they tell each other everything and are still happy together in the same bed. Enter the fatal Kate, a husband-snatcher younger than James' daughter, who propositions him over a restaurant table and gets her tongue down his throat by the end of the meal. The sexually timid James omits to mention this amusing episode to his wife, whereupon James B, his alter ego, bursts frantically on the scene to make sure he gets his alibis right. With the onset of lies the character splits in two, and the comedy begins.

In due course, Eleanor also acquires an alter ego, but meanwhile Mike Ockrent's production discloses some other ingenuities such as Patrick Robertson's two level set which allows James to exit into the matrimonial bedroom and enter a place of assignation through the same door, and intercut the spectacle of James writing a compromising letter with that of a meddlesome friend handing the same document to Eleanor, who promptly splits in two.

With two characters and two alter egos the possible range of permutations is vast, and Nichols exploits them with a wonderful command of surprise and observation of revved up thought processes. Benjamin Whitrow's James sits exchanging small-talk with his wife and mistress while Anton Rodgers, as his other half, is climbing all over the luscious Kate. Eileen Atkins, as Eleanor's double severely ticks off Billie Whitelaw for getting drunk before herself collapsing into a sozzled heap.

Music is another potent element in the show. The first taste we get of Eleanor's choral repertoire is a thunderous blast of the Verdi *Dies Irae* at Kate's apparently harmless exit in the opening scene. And nothing in the play hurts more than the sight of the erring husband trying to regain his wife's trust with a bungled grope on the stairs to the immeasurably desolate accompaniment of the Mozart Requiem.

The second act has nothing like the same clarity of purpose. In it, Nichols picks up his title pun and sets out to explore its religious implications. But although he sets the scene by involving a pair of atheists in great devotional music and the restoration of religious paintings, the metaphor refuses to grow, and a feeling persists that the essential statement has been made, and all Nichols can do is repeat it at the top of his voice. What remains is a small but vastly accomplished comedy that will twist the entrails of everyone who has ever slunk round to the shops with two coins for a secret phone call.

The main couple in Stanley Price's *Moving* (Queen's) are in much the same state as James and Eleanor: a well-to-do dental surgeon and his university-educated wife, left alone when their children quit the nest. But instead of tormenting themselves with sexual jealousy, they embark on the even greater agonies of trying to sell the house. The opening scene, with one supercilious buyer giving way to another whose chances of making an offer depend on a daisy chain stretching to the Scottish border, sets up the picture of the interminable frustrations that have shortened Frank's temper to hair-trigger tension and turned the staid Sarah into a valium fiend.

Peter Jeffrey, Barbara Ferris and Penelope Keith in Moving. *Photo: Donald Cooper*

The spectator's first question is how Mr Price will expand this all-too-familiar slice of life into two and a half fun-packed hours. He does so partly by challenging prevailing West End practice with no fewer than eleven parts, not counting the unseen but inescapable presence of son Ben, a Born Again Christian who afflicts the breakfasst table with clammy cassettes from Connecticut.

Additionally there are such highly coloured figures of Sarah's dizzy actress sister (Barbara Ferris) and a phlegmatic house painter, who specializes in

Billie Whitelaw and Louise Jameson in the RSC's Passion Play *Photo Reg Wilson*

Alexander Method posture exercises, who bring the best out of the prosaically desperate central pair, and rally round to get the place sold

The usual test for a play of this kind is its success in converting shared painful experiences into laughter *Moving* does this wherever it relates directly to the property market it does not achieve this effect with parental emotions But one reason for admiring Robert Chetwyn's production is that it also tackles the question of what kind of life the house has seen and who has the right to live there It does so through the performances of Penelope Keith and Peter Jeffrey who may be two of our best farce actors but who also excel in low-key emotional precision Miss Keith's brand of controlled desperation releases all the laughter you would expect, together with moments of naked distress as where she collapses in tears when she finally gets the house off her hands

subjects seems a heartening trend

Christopher Durang one of America's most promising writers of comedy, has chosen to have fun with a favourite American obsession, psychiatry, in his *Beyond Therapy* at the Phoenix Theatre While Durang keeps his focus on psychiatry, the comedy rides high His two therapists are, of course much crazier than the patients, and the bubbling sources of the play's best moments One is a macho Freudian seducer, the other a jolly lady who calls things by their wrong names "Therapy" becomes "Thermidor" (Kate McGregor Stewart is quite delicious in this part)

Unfortunately, the play is about the patients who have met through an advertisement in a personal column As played by two handsome performers Sigourney Weaver and Stephen Collins, they are as attractive as Mr Durang allows them to be On this saner ground however, Mr Durang falters, runs dry and repeats his effects Also, the play is oddly shaped with a climactic farcical scene happening half way through the second act

There is enough evidence here, though, of Mr Durang's talent, a comic vision that fractures ordinary scenes of American living It is a satirical but sunny view that would do well to let itself go to its worst excesses

Ted Tally, whose *Coming Attractions* was presented at Playwrights Horizons hardly needs this advice Excess is the way he's going to skewer a dozen of America's current madnesses Lonnie a punk with a two dollar handgun, under the guidance of a fast-talking agent becomes a notorious murderer, "The Halloween Killer" In flow the book contracts, movie deals, groupies et al But he falls in love with Miss America and becomes bourgeois The world turns on him and the finale has him in the electric chair

Mr Tally's outrageous concept and his fast flowing scenes are the play's strengths The agent's utterance of "Only two things suceed, violence and bad taste", looks very like a cop-out for an author who certainly delights in both These two excesses are undercut, however, by the moral righteousness which accompanies the outrageous goings-on

Coming Attractions is indeed a comic-strip morality tale, energetic, obvious and fast moving A bright hardworking cast also tries unsuccessfully to convince us that it's funny Symptomatic of the play's central problem is the finale the hero's execution in the electric chair being done as a television special, complete with all the cast as a sequined, top-hatted chorus Then the hero cries out that it's the world that's crazy (and guilty), not he Paging the Madwoman of Chaillot circa 1945

What's excessive about the Mabou Mines' presentation of *Dead End Kids* at the Public Theatre is the subject matter Billed as "A History of Nuclear Power" it's really about nuclear holocaust and how we've all learnt to live (all too cosily) with the Bomb

Mabou Mines is an experimental group, foundation-funded, that shelters in Joe Papp's Public Theatre complex One of its founding members Joanne Akalaitis has conceived and directed *Dead End Kids* through what is clearly a lengthy incubation period of improvisation and creation The result is a collage of scenes

Ellen McElduff Terri O Reilly and B-St John Scholfield in Dead End Kids *Photo Carol Rosegg*

U.S.A.

Nothing succeeds like excess

by Karl Levett

A refreshing sight these days on Off-Broadway stages is that of young American playwrights turning a spotlight on the excesses of contemporary American life The method of spotlighting is also interesting treating a topic that is inherently excessive and then taking it several steps further Young writers turning to comedy to expose serious

and impressions that have a general chronological order but whose juxtapositions are always surprising and often non sequitur

The combination of such subject matter and method could easily run the risk of pretension but what's so refreshing to see are the generous doses of comic invention throughout This comedy, rather than detracting from the seriousness of the topic, provides a perspective that makes the whole mess seem even more awful There's also a freedom from didacticism, a genuine there-it-is-so-take-it-or-leave-it attitude

The crazy quilt of the play's action includes alchemists, a stage magician, Madame Curie, Faust, Einstein, generals, book throwing, pop songs Oppenheimer, documentary films, a stand-up comic, a dead chicken and Geiger counters It's inventive yet selective with a freshness that could again give such free form work a good name Well performed by a large cast, it features a young actress, Ellen McElduff, who has not only grace and beauty but a great comic flair

If you think that the Fool's song in *King Lear* should not be done with straw hats and canes, then you might find *Shakespeare's Cabaret* excessive Otherwise you'll delight in the new rhythms that Lance Mulchay has given Will Shakespeare's lyrics and poems Originally presented Off-Broadway, where it was much more abstract in concept, it is now at the Bijou Broadway's smallest house The new director John Driver, has made it more literal for Broadway audiences, but has also introduced wit and variety into a programme that some might find demanding *Venus and Adonis* is done as a Western odyssey, Venus complete with a Dolly Parton wig "All That Glisters" from *Merchant of Venice* is done by three gold-diggers in one large pink boa

Lest this sounds like Will has been gimmicked out of his true heritage please know that Lance Mulchay has treated each selection with just the right mixture of sensitivity and originality He clearly reveres the Bard, but happily he's not overawed The music is fresh as paint, melodious and contemporary

The cast of six three boys and three girls, is exemplary Will's words come through sharp and clear While many American actors have difficulty speaking Shakespeare, these have no trouble singing it

Yes this is the same Lance Mulchay who provided the music for those early Phillip Street Revues, which many Australians remember with great affection *Shakespeare's Cabaret* is his own concept and given the taste and talent with which it's been created, may its success be excessive in every way

Paulette Pearson Catherine Cox and Patti Perkins in All That Glisters from Lance Mulchay's Shakespeare's Cabaret

Stephen Collins and Sigourney Weaver in Christopher Durang's Beyond Therapy *Photo Martha Swope*

FILM

BY ELIZABETH RIDDELL

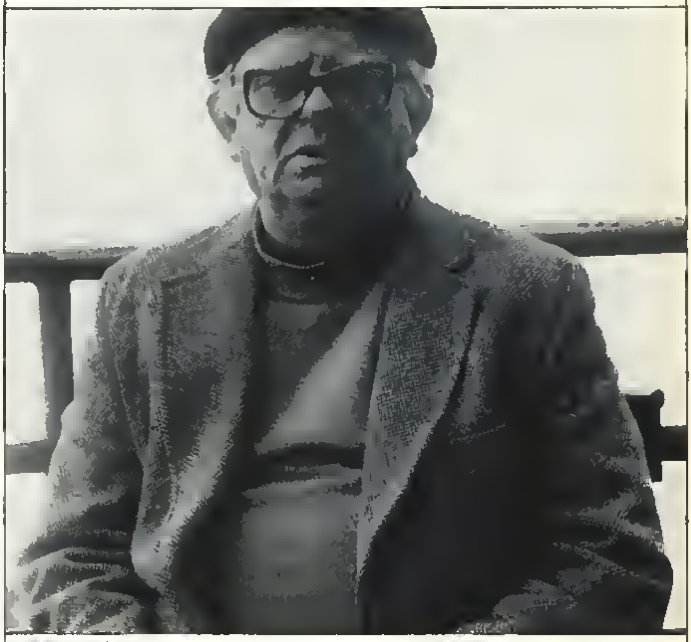
New Generation shorts

The long, frustrating, seemingly hopeless struggle to get exposure on the screens of the nation for Australian-made short subjects — it's amazing that so much government money is being poured out in the cause of film-making when only a handful of taxpayers have the opportunity of seeing the result of all this effort — took a slight turn for the better in the past few weeks.

As part of the Festival of Sydney the programme "Australian Cinema the New Generation" was arranged at the Opera House and the Paddington Town Hall, kicking off with two films by David Bradbury, *Frontline* (reviewed in this magazine when it made the 1980 Sydney Film Festival) and *Wilfred Burchett — Public Enemy Number 1*; the latter finished only just in time for the world premiere at 5pm on January 9, a session from which, incidentally, about 200 people had to be turned away for lack of seats. In other words, house full.

Leading up to this, the film *Flamingo Park* by Clytie Jessup had (and may still be having) a good commercial run in company with *Dressed to Kill* and *Stepping Out* and *Give Trees A Chance — The Story of Terania Creek* had a season at the Opera House. Later the Australian Film Institute presented a season of films made with the help of the Women's Film Fund at the Opera House. *Flamingo Park* got a repeat showing here, with *Pins And Needles Climbers*, *Age Before Beauty* and *Consolation Prize*, which has been sold to US cable TV.

In *Wilfred Burchett*, Bradbury pursues his contrasted-related, original-archival style and it works very well. Burchett, an Australian who became a journalist almost by accident, and whose Doubting Thomas attitude (the role of the DT is a useful one though not given much credit by those who live by faith) led him to reporting wars from the unpopular side and got him tagged as traitor by some Australians when this country was engaged in battle in Korea and Vietnam, is a robust personality. He was the first western journalist into Hiroshima after the bombing, travelling in civilian clothes and carrying an umbrella with which he hoped he might defend himself against Japanese who were likely to be affronted by a European skin so soon after the bombing. What he saw there turned him into a critic of the great powers.



Wilfred Burchett

He explains this — at last minus an accompanying chorus of red-baiters, and emerges as very honest, stubborn, intelligent, comfortable and friendly, and above all very Australian, even to the accent, after forty years away and the deprivation of his passport. It is sad that he now finds that the small oppressed nations he admired have in turn become oppressors, just as ready to put the boot in.

Bradbury's film is not special pleading. He notes that at the time of Stalin's purges Burchett's voice was not raised in protest. The way of the radical enthusiast is indeed a hard one. Bradbury and his co-editor Stewart Young who also worked with him on *Frontline* have made an exciting film, just short of an hour. It sets a fast pace, is not wordy and is never boring. Like *Frontline*, it may have a hard time getting local release. *Frontline* has won nine international prizes and has been sold abroad, but not in Australia. The ABC told Bradbury he wanted too much money and the commercials are simply not interested.

The second most interesting of the batch of films is probably *Stepping Out* (fifty minutes) which also combines a controversial theme with a lively and entertaining script and inspired direction, this time by Chris Noonan. I went to see it reluctantly, as one tries to postpone a visit to a hospital, where one is unable to avoid seeing disturbing sights. But as it turned out the film, while on the face of it a story of mentally retarded people, is filled with life and hope and quite a lot of fun, and leaves the audience joyous, as they testified at an Opera House session by laughing out loud a lot and jumping to their feet at the end to clap and shout. This is not the sort of reaction given a merely worthy cause.

The surface action is concerned mostly

with what happened when the forty or so people from the Lorna Hodgkinson Sunshine Home in Sydney, stimulated and guided by a Chilean arts-therapist and playwright named Aldo Gennaro took to the stage for an "event" Rehearsals, comment from Romayne Grace who has lived at the home since she was nine and is now twenty one and a most engaging girl she is — and the event itself make up the action produced and directed by Noonan and splendidly photographed by Dean Semler to music arranged by Keith Jarrett But more important is the warmth, affection courage, hope, faith and happiness generated on screen Noonan never loses sight of the entertainment factor and so holds attention while the message slips joyously, gently or exuberantly through

On the same bill at the Opera House was *Give Trees A Chance* a 47 minute documentary by Jeni Kendell, photographed (in what must have been enormous difficulties, what with the nature of the terrain at Terania Creek the number of people jammed into a small space, the forest itself and the police) by Paul Tait set to the music of the protestors armed with guitars and other transportable instruments Narration somewhat portentous and delivered with a tone perhaps picked up from one of the bulldozers advancing on the rain forest is delivered by Jack Thompson The film is pretty stirring stuff, moving funny in parts and was made on the smell of an oilrag, well deserving of its award for "courageous film-making" from the Australian Film Institute The man in the seat behind me found it "a bit slanted" and slanted it is in favour of the trees and people Slanting the other way has been effectively handed by newspapers and commercial television

Now And Then a 48-minute fiction from Mark Turnbull with photography by Brian Bansgrove offers the sort of essence of Australian living that more heavy-breathing films often miss The young man, Garry (Ian Gilmour) is not one of your rebels, and the script follows him from a job on boats at a Hawkesbury River village from which he is ejected by the advent of the boss's son from high school — into unemployment without crying too much over his fate Garry has a nice love affair going for him, a pleasant friendship with an old man who sat out the great depression and is philosophical about it now that he can draw his pension and play snooker, and some casual work with rich people on the river If this sounds bland, then I am giving the wrong impression Turnbull has not made a film about job-hunting, getting on in the world and whether it's worthwhile, to have it come out bland But the judgments are implicit, cleverly suggested It is a singularly calm and even-tempered film, with some good set pieces One of the best of these is a "new money" luncheon party on the river (Margo Lee and Alister Smart play the hosts beautifully) during which the lady summons Garry to a bedroom, instructs him to clear the double bed of coats and other gear and then conducts him to a bathroom where one of her fat female guests is drunkenly asleep on the lavatory seat Together they haul her to the bed and lay her out The joke is that Garry has clearly expected his employer to make a pass at him The cast includes Brian Wenzel, Bill Vincent as Old Jones and Tony Barry amusingly sycophantic/sinister as a marina manager

Gerlan and friends from Stepping Out *Photo Jane Hancock*

The 30-minute *Shift* with direction scenario screenplay and editing by Mick Clarke takes itself very seriously in trying to say something significant about the social structure Richard Moir, as an unemployed motor mechanic suddenly smitten with a handsome girl (Laurel McGowan) he meets in a snack bar on what looks like Macbeth's blasted heath, gives one of his inner-turmoil performances, so pent that he would be totally inarticulate except that the script calls on him to occasionally utter a few words Sometimes the induced tenseness comes off and affects the viewer but there are too many inconclusive blank spots On a small scale, it is *FJ Holden*, and like *FJ Holden*, it misses the target

In *Vox Pop* (30 minutes) David O'Brian had a good idea, competently photographed by David Perry But the performances are of varying standards and the parody doesn't come off It is not sharp enough and the story, about the innocent victim of ill-judged media enthusiasm and hamhandedness, is full of holes There is plenty of mileage to be got out of the excesses of print and electronic journalism and somebody will no doubt do a version of vox pop that will come off In this case the over-emphasis and confusion worked against the intention

Chris Dobbin from Stepping Out *Photo Alun White*

Next issue Women's films and others

OPERA

Lucretia, Giovanni and Otello

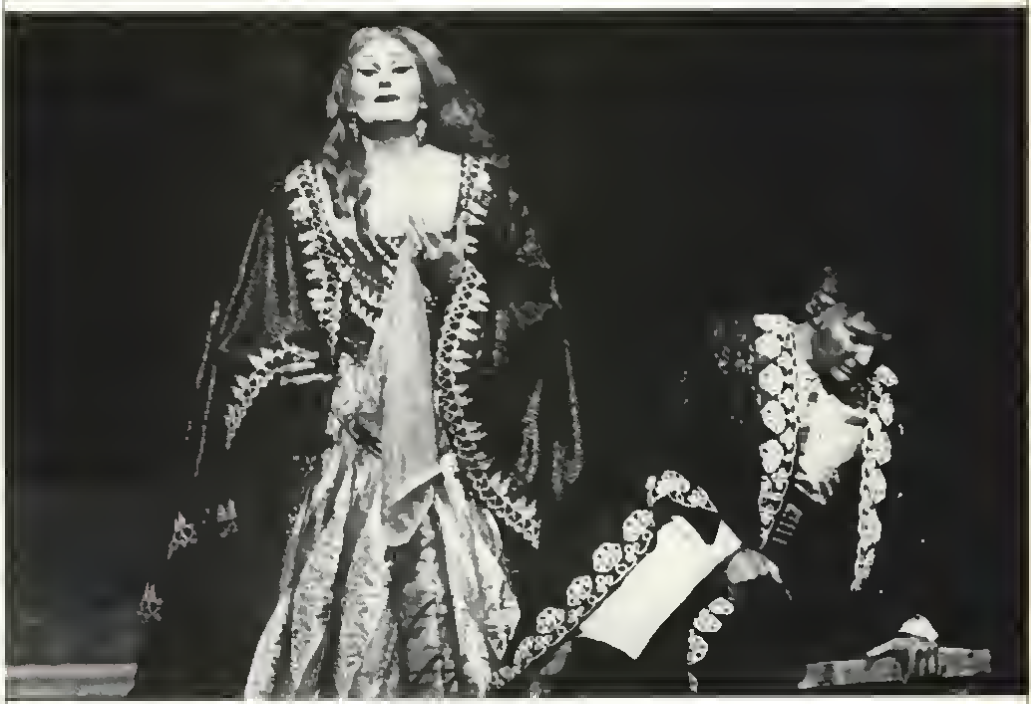
by Ken Healey

Principally by means of careful orchestral logistics, the Australian Opera towards the end of January contrived to have three operas making simultaneous use of the Sydney Opera House. Between Friday and the following Wednesday I saw the first performance of the revival after ten years of Moffat Oxenbould's production of Britten's chamber opera, *The Rape of Lucretia*, the final night of *Don Giovanni*, and the long-awaited premiere of Verdi's *Otello*. The smaller operas occupied the opera theatre while in the concert hall Joan Sutherland sang her first Desdemona for 20 years, conducted by Carlo Felice Cillario, thus appearing for the first time since 1965 in opera under the baton of a maestro other than her husband, Richard Bonynge.

Possibly the best way to approach this premiere is to list what went wrong. In my judgements it was first, second and third a problem of venue. Shaun Gurton's set design largely solved the problem of interminable steps which had suited *Aida* but defeated *Fidelio* in the same place. Deprived of a proscenium Gurton boldly met the demands of the opera's first act, which is Shakespeare's second. Although the opening storm at sea relied heavily on taped sounds, the dominant effect was created by a huge gauze, imaginatively lit by Don Byrnes, and ingeniously removed upon Otello's entrance. A certain lack of cohesion between stage and orchestra (there being, of course, no real pit) was soon evident. Perhaps the participants had some problem in hearing each other - that seemed to be the case throughout the lyrical chorus in homage to Desdemona sung far upstage in Act Two. At all events the performance never rose to the musical heights which we had a right to expect of the occasion. One hoped that architect Joern Utzon had not chosen Australia Day 1981 as an occasion for slipping back unnoticed to see his altered dream of an opera theatre.

Visually the production came alive most forcefully in the third act when Ludovico and the dignitaries of the Venetian court filled the stage with Kristian Fredrikson's lavish costumes, at the same time filling the auditorium with the robust massed sound too infrequently heard during the evening.

The fourth and final act belonged to Sutherland - a touching Desdemona in her bedroom become death chamber. After singing well but not memorably with young Italian tenor Angelo Marenzi in the first act duet, the diva had no further chance to make her vocal mark before the final scene. (The opera is too good to be a mere vehicle for a prima donna.) The dark tonal colours of melodic cor anglais supported by flutes and clarinets at the bottom of their registers prepare us for the ravishing *mezza voce* of



Joan Sutherland (Desdemona) and Angelo Marenzi (Otello) in the AO's Otello
Photo: Branco Gaica

The Australian Opera

Jenufa costume design by Michael Stennett

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that most distinctive of soprano sounds, Sutherland's opulent voice. No coloratura dazzlement, just a haunting vocal line, profoundly moving in "Salce" (The Willow Song), and then bringing us to the threshold between pain and ecstasy in the following "Ave Maria". From such a condition I was rudely brought down when Verdi and his otherwise excellent librettist Boito had the smothered heroine sing three melting phrases a minute after her demented husband had finished suffocating her.

Vocally, the protagonists in this opera are Otello and his Ancient. Baritone John Shaw bore just that relation to his tenor, Marenzi. More than ten years after his best years at Covent Garden Shaw is no longer a distinguished Iago, merely a run-of-the-mill villain whose great aria, "Credo", passed unapplauded and almost unnoticed. Neither was he able to match the younger man in that rousing duet which concludes the second act.

Marenzi is unquestionably the finest tenor to partner Sutherland in Australia since the young Pavarotti during the Williamson-Sutherland season in 1965. (One can hardly count Donald Smith's quickly aborted pairing with her in *I Masnadieri*). Marenzi uses the power of a Heldentenor to pour out a tone of Italianate beauty. And the higher he sings, the better he sounds. Still inclined too often to face front, downstage centre and sing with arms extended in an inverted Vee, this young man may become one of the most exciting dramatic tenors of the next decade. Nevertheless his considerable achievement and greater promise allied with Sutherland's magical final scene did not manage to rescue this ambitious undertaking.

Just as George Ogilvie's *Otello* proved to be the operatic disappointment of the month, so the same producer's *Don Giovanni*, with Kristian Fredrikson once again designing the costumes, provided the most unexpected pleasures. I count it a special occasion in the Opera House when a masterpiece, known and cherished in every detail, suddenly provides a new dimension of enjoyment.

Ogilvie and his new cast have shown us for the first time in recent years (and perhaps ever) in this country why Mozart described this opera as "dramma giocoso". Any production that sets its mind to making us laugh can do so, given an adequate Leporello, a suitably doltish Masetto, and a coquettish Zerlina. But have you ever chuckled darkly each time the Don is foiled in another attempt at conquest? No? Then begin lobbying the Australian Opera to reunite this actor's director with Bruce Martin as his Don and Marilyn Richardson and Isobel Buchanan as the pair of spurned Spanish ladies.

The strengths of the production are many, its faults few. Central to its success is Bruce Martin's compulsive philanderer with a sardonic sense of humour, which he carries all the way to his final meeting with the Stone Guest. Possessing one of the best focussed of the company's larger voices, Martin even brought a touch of humour without indignity to the daring scene in which Ogilvie has the Don sing the Champagne aria while dressing - he begins clad only in a sort of diaper.

Marilyn Richardson's Donna Anna matched Carden's demented bereavement at the death of the Commendatore (Clifford Grant, vocally less impressive than usual), and thereafter invested the role with a humanity which, coupled with the memory of Carden's sustained passion, finally banishes the convention of Anna as cold relative to the frenzied Elvira. With the captivating Buchanan singing Elvira with more technical assurance and evenness than I had expected at this stage of her development, that character's credibility is supplied by a quality of youthful idealism.

The bucolic lovers, Zerlina and Masetto, were sung by two of the company's younger talents, one of whom I had seen as Junius in a decidedly heavier role in *The Rape Of Lucretia* on the previous night. Kathleen Moore convinces me in a way that Marilyn Horne on record could never do that Zerlina can succeed as a mezzo. She is not tall, with a sprightly figure reminiscent of the younger Cynthia Johnston, and she smiles winningly. As her swain, Gregory Yurisich, his nether regions suitably cruppered outside his breeches, was a colt full of mettle, well able to whinny his bold song "Ho Capito" to the stallion who would cover his filly. Yurisich brought an impeccable sense of comictiming to the role as well as a voice with the requisite "ping".

The production's shortcomings are less important than its virtues, but must be noted. With a budget for sets that would better become a regional company, designer Hugh Colman manages by and large to make us forget that from other operas we have come away whistling the scenery. But how did the maskers' trio making the most beautiful sounds of the entire first act carry on against a

Bruce Martin (Giovanni) and Kathleen Moore (Zerlina) in the AO's Don Giovanni
Photo: Branko Gaica

Margaret Russell (Lucretia) and Rosemary Gun (Bianca) in the AOV Rape of Lucretia *Photo Branco Gaica*

counterpoint of hammering which followed the hasty lowering of a black curtain and which no doubt ensured the solidity of the ballroom scenery? This scene was, incidentally, a disappointment from a producer who had so effortlessly solved so many of the opera's other staging problems From the dancing to the Don s escape it was shapeless and unconvincing

Conductor Stuart Challender was not able to coax the Elizabethan Melbourne orchestra into more than pedestrian accompaniment, despite the fact that he is the most physically active of conductors Unfortunately, the more highly regarded Sydney orchestra did little better for maestro Cillario, and not even David Kram with his dozen hand-picked instrumental soloists for *Lucretia* attained the precision and style that John Bacon had elicited from their predecessors ten years before Orchestrally our opera is in a barely tolerable state

I had not been impressed with Moffat Oxenbould's production of *The Rape Of Lucretia*, which I saw often in rehearsal and in several performances in 1971 It now seems to be a good deal better than it was then, although still not entirely successful The original cast had been amazingly disparate in both ability and suitability, with three highlights Robert Gard's Male Chorus, the Lucretia of Lauris Elms, and John Pringle as a thrillingly sexual Tarquinius (but oddly mismatched with the dignity of Elms as a Roman matron)

This time all six singers in the drama are youngsters, flanked by their seniors as chorus Gard is, of course, exemplary in all the opera roles written for Peter Pears, while Nance Grant, though coping better than her predecessors with the part of the Female Chorus, was far too often indistinct in diction, and was forced to resort to a chest register for much of the relatively low-lying vocal line

Despite a score of such quality and subtlety, the opera is unusually difficult to bring off and not just because it cannot rely on bombast or romance for effect Britten and his librettist Ronald Duncan have adapted Andre Obey's French play on the celebrated Roman story, and have set it in a deliberately anachronistic Christian context Capitalising on the fact that the early church was predominantly Eastern producer Oxenbould and his designer Desmond Digby have kept the Romans of the sixth century BC starkly simple, grounding the action on an inclined circle of Byzantine pattern, and mirroring the transforming spiritual richness of Christian values in striking priest-mosaic figures - the Male and Female Choruses

Given that the opera was written in 1946, and is neither modern realism nor post-*Hair* spectacle, a non-naturalistic style for its playing must be found Even the commentating choruses become emotionally involved in the drama which indicates that the treatment must not be altogether cool I believe that Britten has belatedly given a clue for the successful realisation of this pagan-Christian amalgam in the three parables for church performance which had been seen at the 1970 Adelaide Festival not long before Moffat Oxenbould's original production of this opera At his second attempt Oxenbould has moved closer to the ritual of the church parables, but he still has his choruses too physically mobile and he still has not sufficiently stylised, even ritualised the Roman scenes

In the absence of an ecclesiastical venue, I found that Oxenbould's realisation now seeks many of these production values John Fulford as yet lacks the vocal dominance required of Tarquinius, nor is he sufficiently menacing physically On the other hand, the Junius of Gregory Yurisich is hard-edged businesslike, and calculating John Wegner is not yet mature enough to carry the warmth and balance of Collatinus Lucretia's husband

Margaret Russell though attractive and striking musically is neither contralto nor sufficiently patrician of bearing to portray the darkness which finally envelopes Lucretia Her nurse and her maid, Bianca and Lucia, are finely sung and acted by Rosemary Gunn and Angela Denning the latter floating strands of lyric sound and plaiting them in air into song The shortcomings in performance among this cast are almost all those of excessive youth

DANCE

BY WILLIAM SHOLDRIDGE

Three Musketeers — spirit willing, timing spot on

There is a moment in Andre Prokovsky's *The Three Musketeers* just after the beginning of Act 2 that manages somehow to encapsulate everything that is wrong with the new ballet

The Duke of Buckingham having received the diamond necklace from his lover the Queen of France, does a little tottering solo of homage to it He then secretes it away in one of those hidden chambers that are de rigeur in costume dramas like this and is blithely visited by Richelieu's minion, Milady who having got past all the guards with narry a word, starts dancing for the Duke, without any reason and without having been invited

The dance is one of those Rose Adagio sort of big numbers with the requisite quotient of nervous balances, intricate partnerings and bright solo variations For what it is, it is very well put together, but it falls flat on its face because it is robbed of any need for existence In that it has many of the flaws of *Anna Karenina* and by no means can be accounted an advance on the earlier work Once again there are some wonderful moments of choreography and humour, but there is the same scratchy textual basis for them that lets them evaporate as soon as they're over

On the plus side, the ballet has a pleasant, amiable goofiness that occasionally collapses into low camp There is drama, lyrical love scenes, local colour, intrigue, comedy and much swashing of buckles Frankly this is the only way it could have been presented, Victor Hugo's inflated heroics would only be ludicrous today if done flat, so a hefty measure of distanced irony is required It unfortunately deflates any sense of sympathy with either character or event, but that is how it goes

Kelvin Coe Dale Baker Paul de Masson and David Burch in the AB's Three Musketeers

It is basically a vehicle for the four main male dancers of the AB, a meaty role for one of their best ballerinas (Michela Kirkaldie — and her understudies are hard put to equal her in it) and plenty of frisking and busy frollicking for the soloists and corps de ballet On the opening night the four lead men, being David Burch Dale Baker and Paul de Masson as the Musketeers and Kelvin Coe as D'Artagnan gave the parts everything they had, the spirit was willing and the timing was spot on

The Musketeers in Act I are given a solo each and that is their characterisation done in one fell swoop, nobody worries much about it after that David Burch gets a slightly Bournonville piece full of glissade jetes and ordinary jetes — too many jetes actually, we all know Burch can jump, so what else is new? De Masson has an intricate solo of swift beats and turns in attitude and Dale Baker gets a quick mess of kicks beats and a male version of the fouette Their big fight scene with D'Artagnan to ward off the Cardinal's guards was hilariously timed down to the last split second but by the fifth performance was already looking drab and laboured

Later on the Queen and her serving maids and confidantes get a scene, a group divertissement and a solo, so does the King (excellent portrayals here by both Ken Whitmore or Jak Callick, foppish without being faggotty) and so do the servants, the emissaries and so on — in fact I've never seen such a democratic ballet in my life Everybody gets a chance to shine somewhere, even the gypsies and serving maids in the tavern scenes, and the Musketeers always pop up somewhere going through a

Michela Kirkaldie and Kelvin Coe in The Three Musketeers *Photo Branco Gaica*

vague variation of their opening scene This ballet, all distinct from *Anna Karenina* is stuffed full of dancing and the pace never stops, but little of it stands out in the memory and a consuming greyness starts to come over the whole after a while

Act 2 is where the choreography comes into its own, even though the dramatic thread may waver The cardboardish Buckingham does a languorous balancing solo to a portrait of the Queen (which Gary Norman could manage but Jonathon Hook couldn't and he shouldn't have been allowed to)

Kirkaldie as Milady does the aforementioned big number to seduce him beautifully and the piece gets great applause Later on, having found the necklace, she has a fast and furious fight scene with Norman which is one of the most convincingly vicious fights I've seen on the ballet stage and then, having secured part of the necklace she goes through one of the most wonderfully unchivalrous pas de deux's with the disguised D'Artagnan that ever graced the annals of ballet

Act 3 falls down again unfortunately with the inevitable Australian Ballet Ball Scene Everyone is dressed in the same silver and blue get-up, doing the same dancing through which is woven the fabric of the last stages of the drama which consequently gets smothered and lost

Anyway, the necklace is returned Milady gets her revenge on the beloved of D'Artagnan who is tortured and almost raped by a band of enthusiastic bully boys but is eventually saved by the 3 M's and D'Artagnan although Milady still manages to kill through poison She in turn is sent off to be dispatched by an executioner without any further ado or ceremony, and so on and so on, with one delirious plot turn after another

After all this has transpired and we are left waiting for something else to happen to round off the work satisfactorily, bright pink streamers come cascading down and everyone romps on for their curtain calls

It is a nasty slap in the face and it doesn't come off, everything about it jars Presumably Prokovsky was attempting something of the style of the tableaux-vivant finales that closed off the Lully-Moliere opera ballets of the (17th century) period, but you'd hardly know and it merely appears as an excuse to finish the ballet and get-everyone-out-of-the theatre-before-ten-thirty -otherwise we'll-have-to-pay-overtime

Be that as it may the audience loves it and the opening Sydney season saw queues of people waiting for SRO tickets and this will no doubt be repeated elsewhere

But there are serious flaws in the work's construction because again Prokovsky doesn't know how to scale and bevel his scenes or characters None of the folk are involving and the audience laughs at them rather than with them It is however a funny ballet, and most of the time the laughs arise from the choreography and the situations rather than any deliberate mugging on the dancers' part which is in itself an achievement But go back a second or a third time and the gaps in the fabric start to show

One of the achievements that will remain outstanding is the selection job Guy Woolfenden did on the bits and pieces of Verdi for the ballet's score I don't know why they didn't stick to the actual ballet music that Verdi wrote, perhaps for reasons of continuity and facility, but it is a rich, tuneful and entertaining score and one that I hope the Australian Ballet will have commercially recorded Peter Farmers costumes are rich and varied but they tend to distract at times and even spoil the line and balance of some of the female dancers, but apparently the AB doesn't mind that so long as the audience likes them Mention was made in the programme that the braiding on the costumes was enough to stretch from Melbourne to Sydney as if this was some sort of achievement It is, I suppose, but I wouldn't care if the braiding stretched three times round the solar system, it doesn't improve the ballet any

I would give the ballet a life of about five to 10 years, already some of the sequences are dated but it was on opening night a rich, entertaining souffle wonderfully managed by Christopher Maver who later was so tragically killed in an air crash The AB is going to have to look long and hard for a replacement to him and I doubt if things there will be as flawless and as polished as they were when Maver was stage manager

Ken Whitmore and Sheree Rayment as the King and Queen of France in the ABs Three Musketeers *Photo Branco Gaica*

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10 April to 2 May

John Cranko's Onegin, highly charged with passion and drama, is a choreographic masterpiece based on Alexander Pushkin's poem.

With haunting beautiful music by Tchaikovsky, an elegant set, exciting costumes by Kurt Helms Stefan and breathtaking sets and costumes by Jürgen Rose, Onegin is one of the world's most popular full length ballets.

John Cranko's Onegin is quite simply a superb spectacle.
Clive Barnes, New York Post

The Australian ballet shines in Onegin. Brilliant choreography, very fine dancing, magnificent costumes and scenery.
The Australian

VARIACIONES CONCERTANTES, POEMS, TO BE ANNOUNCED
6 to 26 May

Choo San Goh, one of the world's most sought after choreographers, stages his Variaciones Concertantes to a background of contemporary Argentinian music and a sun blazing backdrop suggesting some pre-Columbian South American environment. Poems by Sir John Betjeman, set to music by Jan Parker, provided the theme for Robert Ray's delightful ballet Poems.

a delicate, well crafted and ingenious illustration of the poems that captured the mood and the dance styles of the 20's.
Jill Sykes, The Sydney Morning Herald

A third work, to be announced, will complete this programme.

SWAN LAKE
3 to 23 November

The Hunchback produced on was a lavish and spectacular production. The Australian Ballet, by Anne Woolliams in 1977. The ravishing Tchaikovsky score, the magnificent sets and costumes by Tom Lingwood, an orchestra, all the drama, spectacle and poetry of this great masterpiece.

A worthwhile, superbly successful production, stands on its own as magnificent entertainment and great balletic art.
The Herald, Melbourne

THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME
27 November to 17 December

Victor Hugo's great novel, set in Medieval Paris, will now be presented as a large dance-drama choreographed by Bruce Wells, produced by George Ogilvie and designed by Kristian Fredrikson.

The story revolves around Esmeralda, the beautiful gypsy girl who is loved by Captain Phoebus and is adored and rescued by Quasimodo, the hunchbacked bell ringer of one of the world's great cathedrals.

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STATE REP MARGUERITE WELLS

Display not celebration

OPENING ON BROADWAY

by Marguerite Wells

Opening on Broadway: a celebration of the broadway musical written and devised by Trevor Findlay. Canberra Combined Theatres touring Victorian and South Australian country towns 31 December 1980 to 17 January 1981. Canberra Season: Theatre 3, 27 January to 7 February 1981.
Director: **Lorraine Francis**, Producer: **Mark Emerson**, Musical Directors: **Rose Ianno** and **Andrew Ross**
(Amateur)

If Shaw had thought of it he would have said that there are ten people who enjoy a good tune for every one who cares about the words. (He did say something very like.) The history of opera, pop music and the Broadway musical are proof enough. Certainly there could be few tunes more infectious than *Nothing like a Dame*, and few lyrics with less to say to a modern audience. *Mandalay* hits much closer home. There could be few plays extolling an ethos more latuous and shallow than that of *Grease* (whose whole theme is a *celebration* of the corruption of innocence), but it is the longest-running musical ever. Even the most discriminating audiences can lose their intellectual integrity when faced with a musical, it seems. Not always. In the integrity stakes, *Man of La Mancha* certainly comes out tops, with great plot, beautifully handled, great lyrics and splendid music.

Opening on Broadway brings it all home, as it moves in pretty much historical sequence through the empty tinsel of the tunes of the Ziegfeld Follies ("Shine on Harvest Moon" and "By the Light of the Silvery Moon") all the way to the most recent musicals, many of which, like *Grease*, *Chicago* and even *Hair* show a slightly uneasy tendence to revel in nostalgia for sleaziness and vice. Odd that a genre whose innocence once glowed, sickening like the morning sun through a hangover, should grow up to extol the hangover.

Increasing sophistication (technical as well as social sophistication) has meant that the music as well as the lyrics has become more and more complex and intrinsically clever, to the extent that these days there are songs like "Air" (from *Hair* ("Welcome, sylphur dioxide. Hello carbon monoxide. The air, the air is everywhere"), that could very well be the theme song for dozens of social movements that have really only taken off since it was written. There are even songs that hit you square in the solar plexus, like "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" from *Cabaret*, the ultimate

"Give Officer Krupke" from Opening on Broadway

evocation of innocence, peace and beauty, in the service of fascism.

It is always a tribute to the playwright, director and cast when the reviewer is tempted to write only about the ideas of play stimulated and not about the production. *Opening on Broadway* was well written, well cast, well performed and well directed. Not to mention well choreographed, well lit and well accompanied. It is a production with an unusual history. The death of one's father is not usually the sort of thing that stimulates you to great creativity (not for a number of years anyway, after the hurt wears off), but Mark Emerson, whose father died of heart disease, put the company and the production together as a benefit for the National Heart Foundation, to tour the provinces (country towns in western Victoria and South Australia) before a january opening in Canberra. The first night audience (in Dartmoor, Vic. Pop 200) numbered 280 souls. With the occasional lull, they've gone from strength to strength, to full houses in Canberra as well, and it is now certain that the National Heart Foundation will benefit to the tune of some thousands of dollars.

The cast rehearsed from August to New Year's Eve, with three days off at Christmas, and rehearsals included a three day stint in caravans on a country property, treading the boards of a little community hall in the middle of nowhere. They were a very good cast indeed, with strong, pleasant, unaffected voices, good diction, except in some of the most recent songs where slurring is compulsory, and best of all, discipline. You can't have a chorus line doing soft-shoe or high kicks each to his own internal rhythm: the high kicks were in chorus and the soft shoe routines had a distinct soft-shoe beat. Need one say more?

It was not a production with theatrical innovations to stun and startle, after all it was an historical recreation, but it was full of little bursts of humour, apt caricatures of caricatures and straight numbers with stings in the tail. I would like to say that it sent its audience away singing, but it didn't. The purple-nosed gentleman next to me rocked and rolled and chirrupped his way through the show and would certainly have joined in if they'd let him, but musical comedy is passive theatre. Once the singing was over his descended again into his usual well-ordered self, and rolled out the door chatting, not singing. The rest of the audience displayed no compulsion to join in. They treated it as a display of the Broadway musical, not a celebration. That's infinitely sad. The basic human need for music (the one that means that there are ten people who enjoy a good tune for every one who cares about the words) has been refined to the extent that you can't get Australians to sing except when drunk or under cover of someone else's music, and they'll rarely sing then. Participatory music has been refined right out of our society, except for the talented and devoted few. We have lost touch with human nature.

This production could have mended that, if only for a few hours. It could have flowed across the footlights and brought the audience in to join in the cast's joy of celebration, but it didn't. Perhaps it would have taken just that little bit more confidence than they had: perhaps they took comfort in the presence of the fourth wall. So for the cast it remained a celebration and for the audience a display. But it was a very good display indeed, and if the audience didn't go away singing, they certainly left with lighter step.

THEATRE/NSW

STATE REP
LUCY WAGNER,
EXEC EDITOR

Breathtaking richness of myth

THE MAN FROM MUKINUPIN

by Robert Page

The Man From Mukinupin by **Dorothy Hewitt**. Music **Jim Cotter**. Sydney Theatre Company Drama Theatre Opera House. Opened February 5, 1981. Director **Rodney Fisher**. Designer **Shnun Gurton**. Lighting **Nigel Levings**. Musical Director **Sarah de Jong**. Costumes **Anna Senior**. Design Co-ordinator **Melody Cooper**. Choreography **Christine Kohni**. Stage Manager **Julie Warn**.
Cast: Clarry Hummer, Widow Tuesday **Maggie Dence**. Clemmy Hummer **Anne Harders**. Eek, Zeek Perkins **Ron Haddrick**. Edie Perkins **Judi Farr**. Polly Lilly Perkins, **Noni Hazelhurst**. Jack, Harry Tuesday **Colin Friels**. Cecil Brunner, Max Montebello **John Gaden**. Mercy Montebello **Ruth Cracknell**. Musicians **Peter Deane Dutcher, John summers, Andrew de Teliga**.
(Professional)

As the safety curtain goes up to reveal hundreds of stars across the panoramic stage of the Drama Theatre Sara de Jong's haunting reworking of Jim Cotter's music acts like a narcotic on the imagination and the tromp l'oeil as the stars rise seem to send up on a cosmic journey towards this land, coloured like a wound and people by a huddle of actors at its centre, one feels that at last Dorothy Hewett has found a director with the insight and ability to match her genius.

If *Pandora's Cross* was her urban nocturne (a play far superior to what was realised on the ill-fated Paris stage) and led her to a dark night of the soul, this is her idyll of the west — on its bright side an epithalamion bursting with life and fecundity, its obverse a midsummer journey into the heart of outback darkness.

Sadly, director Rodney Fisher does not fulfill the promise of the opening vision. Certainly a play of any importance is susceptible to a multitude of directional interpretations but one can be sure that the more singular the approach - however intelligent and even reverential it might be — the more the fullness of its conception will be constricted. *Mukinupin* in Adelaide had all the razamatazz of an *Oh What A Lovely War*; in sydney it has been forged into a work of fervid significance.

Hence many of the brighter songs have been excised and those that remain (apparently kept in by the cast) — particularly "Everything's Coming Up Roses" as the lovers are united in a scene a faire — appear incongruous. A play which visually encompasses the village store as much as creek bed, the town hall stage — for an hilarious "Strangling of Desdemona" — equally as the skeletal windmill, it has been bogged in shaun gurton's set of disturbing Drysdale bleakness and daubed in deep vermillion and ochrous pigment of a menstrual but barren landscape.

Yet even given such an approach some of the richer scenes have been robbed of their reverberation. the night scene where Hewett has the audacity to transplant the hobby horse from his mediaeval ritual origins and put him beside crippled Sycorax and a Caliban, the dangerous plots of a Sebastian and Antonio and the comedy of Trinculo and Stephano. Here we have the love of Polly and Jack, the night scene and Eek Perkins' consort and then massacre of the aborigines. It is a structure which can take in, too, the formal devices of the play within the play (the Msontebello "Strangling"), the masque (in the aubade and marriage of Harry Tuesday and the half caste Lily Perkins) and direct audience address. Comparisons, given such technique, can be made only with Elizabethan models.

STC Man from Mukinupin. Photo: Dennis del Favero

Clemmy Hummer, MC and sorceress of the night, the lurking creekbed Flasher (raised sprit of Priapus), Widow Tuesday prancing like a weird sister from *Macbeth* and the crazed Zeek Perkins, astronomer and water diviner is here made subordinate to realism. It is contained and circumscribed as a snightmare of our heroine Polly Perkins, where it is originally conceived as part vision, part reality, part realisation of deep tensions, taboos and traumas, part a turning of the stone to see the town's dark underbelly.

Fisher has at least erred on the side of honouring the seriousness of Hewett's vision, it is a pity that he has not equally appreciated its humour and breadth. A breadth like that of *The Tempest* which in the course of a simple boy-meets-girl plot line encompasses the darkness of a

Its richly allusive text encompasses references to Macauley, Tennyson and Longfellow, and from this country's greatest writers, Gilmore, Lawson and Ogilvie, with disarming ease. It holds back from a descent into pretension, save perhaps for the lines of Shakespeare put in the mouth of Polly's mother, Edie Perkins, (Judi Farr).

The strength of Fisher's production, if overly reverential, lies in the thorough-going direction and his ability to draw fine performances from a first rate cast. "Flat" characters (in the sense that characters like Dickens, or indeed Miranda and co in *The Tempest* may be termed flat) take on a tremendous depth. Most notably Colin Friels' riveting performance as Jack the grocer's boy turned matinee idol and his madcap brother Harry and Noni Hazlehurst who portrays a spectrum of emotion as the wide-eyed Polly who grows in age and widsom and the wild-haired, abused half caste, half sister Lily — the flotsam of white oppression.

Ron Haddrick reminds us again of his enormous stature as an actor as the brothers Eek and Zeek, and John Gaden shows his tremendous versatility as the Flasher, Max Montebello and the touped lingerie salesman Cecil Brunner. One may carp that Mercy Montebello appears a touch too old and that the Hummer sisters also jetsam of the theatrical world — rather too young, but Ruth Cracknell, Jane Harders and Maggie Dence carry off their parts with such accomplishment that such reservations are thrown up only in hindsight.

This production proves Dorothy Hewett to be out major poetic dramatist. The breathtaking richness of her vision so deeply Australian yet so profoundly universal, should give pause to those who see theatre caught in the lockstep of naturalism. She is myth-maker and troubadour of this land — the creator and songstress of the legends that prevent us from "dying of strangeness" (Les Murray).

Clear and sincere didacticism

DEEDS

by Barry O'Connor

Deeds by Howard Brenton and Trevor Griffiths with Ken Campbell and David Hare. Ensemble Theatre Milsons Point NSW. Opened January 14 1981
Director **Brian Young**, Designer **Shaun Gurton**, Lighting **Ian McGrath**
Cast Ken Deed **Christopher Lewis** with **Mike O'Brien, Sandra Bates, Michael Ross, Ross Hohnen, Wanda Bodourka, Allan Chapple, Jude Barlue, David Cahill, Gary Baxter, Don Carter, Julie Jones, Naina Bloch, Terry Byrnes.**
(Professional)

THE POWDER KILLS is the message of this relentlessly polemical drama by four leftist British playwrights. The "powder" seems innocuous enough being milk powder or more accurately, baby food formula. But in the wrong hands, namely those of the ill-informed third world masses, it is as lethal as were the measles, small pox, and the rest of the colonial curse spread by imperialism to the world's native populations.

The main focus of *Deeds* however is Britain's domestic third world, represented by Ken Deed, a Lancashire worker who loses his daughter by cot death and finds himself taking on the Establishment to discover the cause of this medical conundrum. Cot deaths, in case you don't know, are those mysterious and sudden occurrences which take babies usually under six months of age. What causes cot death is not absolutely certain, but recently journalistic attention has turned accusingly to formula- rather than breast-feeding.

When Ken Deed learns that the "formula" is to blame - from a nurse not a doctor, note - he goes on a crusade against the law courts, the big corporations, and the British parliamentary system. "Ken Deed" sounds like "Candide", which is presumably deliberate, since our hero finds himself an innocent at sea in a world which is revealed to be increasingly depraved and corrupt.

Judges are old dodderers with speech impediments; doctors unsympathetic and jocularly forgiving of incompetent colleagues, parliamentarians and business moguls, ineffectual or depraved, kinky and degenerate. This might seem something of a one-sided view there will even be some who call *Deeds* propaganda. The play does have a definite point of view, but it is one which it presents not in the crude agit-prop style so much as through the simplicity of a mediaeval morality play.

The clear and sincere voice of didactic theatre resonates in the crisp acting style demanded by director Brian Young, echoing about the scaffolding of Shaun Curton's set. The cast commandingly makes its way through a succession of episodic scenes, by turns transforming the Ensemble's acting space (including the aisles) into a hospital, a railway yard, prison, penthouse, Hyde Park corner, and tenement flat. And all with a great economy of means. A handful of actors play an armful of parts. It is therefore understandable if not forgivable that "blacking up" is used in the play's Indian and African roles.

This is the 21st anniversary production of socially committed drama at the Ensemble. *Deeds* is an appropriate birthday present for the occasion.

Sandra Bates and Chris Lewis in "Deed"

Errors of judgement

THE CHOIR

by Lucy Wagner

The Choir by Errol Bray. Nimrod Theatre Upstairs. Opened January 21 1981
Director **Neil Armfield** Designer **Eamon O'Arcy**, Lighting **Peter Smith**, Stage Manager **Libby Higgin**
Cast Paul **Peter Kowitz**, David **Tony Sheldon**, Colin **David Atkins**, Garry **Simon Burke**, Michael **Tyler Coppin**, Peter **David Stingsby**, Andrew **Jim Holt**
(Professional)

At the 1980 Playwrights' Conference *The Choir* was the succes de scandale of the workshop productions. Directed, then too by Neil Armfield it made a powerful and shocking piece of symbolic theatre to which Nimrod quickly bought the rights and pre-publicised their production as a "long awaited theatrical event". Somewhere between the initial enthusiasm and the opening of *The Choir*, though, a crisis of confidence in the play seems to have occurred which has resulted in decisions that have undermined the strengths and

exacerbated the weaknesses of the piece

The first of these appears in the programme where the company has felt it necessary to print "Beautiful Lies an alternative reading of *The Choir*", in which Helen Mills argues directly against the play's central metaphor at greater length than Errol Bray's own authorial note immediately above. This is a new practice for Nimrod and an unusual one for a theatre concerned with the furthering of new playwrights.

But far more negative in effect has been the decision to set and play *The Choir* naturalistically. It relies fundamentally on the one-to-one symbol of the castration of an orphanage choir to preserve their voices for the emotional destruction that institutions of all kinds can wreak on young people. The play is not abstract, but nor is it a documentary of orphanage life; its metaphor is general, not particular, and what imaginative power it has is lost when grounded in the specifics of naturalism. Its aim is not, like *Bent*, to describe actual atrocities to provoke horror at such human behaviour, but, more like German Expressionist works, to raise a horrifying image whose ramifications may spread as they will, but which if taken literally can be nothing but ludicrous.

So in Canberra the makeshift set was quite adequate to conjour the ambience of institution and the superficial shock reaction to the promiscuity and violence was leavened by the boys being played by actors well above the supposed ages with no pretence otherwise.

Eamon D'Arcy's set was remarkable for being such an accurate facsimile of an institutional dormitory with its finger-marked doors and lockers, tasteless walls and lino and actual neon lighting. It destroyed the play's potential to make the audience question the nature of institutions at large and conspired with the naturalistic style of the production to lead one to reject the insanely authoritarian orphanage as incredible, the castrations as grand guignol and the matron figure Miss Lawson as the phantasm of a psychotic male mind.

Four of the original workshop cast returned to their roles in this production but the overall level of performance seemed lower. Peter Kowitz and David Atkins tried to keep a balance between the suggestion and imitation of adolescence, but others sank into the swamp of method, dragged down further by Armfield's decision to give them short back and sides haircuts and institutional dress, down to navy blue underpants.

The casting of two pivotal characters, those of Andrew and Michael, caused problems. Andrew is the "senior" at sixteen — in the dormitory, and sheik in a harem of eunuchs. To make sense of the plot he must have attraction, power and charisma — enough for Miss Lawson to have spared him castration for his sexuality, for "his boys" to resort to a roster for his favours and for him to become the object of revenge when the worms turn and make him one of themselves. Jim Holt, fresh out of NIDA, could not command this power, looked ill at ease and, when naturalism was stressed in every other aspect, absurdly younger than the rest of the cast. Tyler Coppin, also, failed to generate a still but disturbing centre to the play in Michael, the silent boy who reveals that the castration is too late and therefore futile.

This production is an unexpected error of judgement by Neil Armfield, whose direction is usually so fresh and coherent as to gloss over in production any faults in new scripts, and particularly when it was his workshopping of *The Choir* that lead to the early acclaim for an interest in the play.

From the two showings it seems that the play does have a theatrical power and Errol Bray's strengths as a writer lie in his ear for dialogue and his ability to create a lean and clear structure. The ideas of *The Choir*, though, are extreme and encapsulated in a heavy-handed metaphor the constant explication of which becomes insultingly didactic. Ironically the initial worry about *The Choir* was whether it could be played at all by adult actors, this production proves that it can only work when kept at arms length in all aspects, from realism.

"The Choir"

Power, economy and poetic realism

THE LIBERATION OF SKOPJE

by Dorothy Hewett

The Liberation of Skopje by Dusan Janovic. Festivalo Sydney. East Sydney Technical College. Opened January 12, 1981.
Director: **Ljubisa Ristic**; Assistant: **Nada Kokotovic**; Settings: **Dinka Jericevic**; Lighting: **Damir Kruhak**. Cast: Zoran: **Susa Stanojevic**; Ilica: **Perica Martinovic**; Lence: **Inge Apeli**; Georgi: **Rade Serbedzija**; Dusan: **Branko Novkovic**; Ana: **Antonia Cule**; Beli: **Alif Abazov**; Luda Vava: **Tina Puhalo**; Renata: **Iva Puhalo**; Oskar: **Drazen Karapandza**; Trajko: **Igor Koveoevic**; Tahir: **Vladimir Puhalo**; Tasin: **Mile Rupcic**; Bale: **Miljenko Brlecic**; Doctor: **Ratko Buljan**; German Officer: **Branko Supek**; Chief: **Darko Curdo**; Gospodinov: **Dragoljub Lazarov**; Stojcev: **Tone Gogala**. *(Professional)*

The Liberation of Skopje by Dusan Jovanovic was played by the Zagreb Theatre Company in the courtyards of East Sydney Tech (the old Darlinghurst Jail), during the 1981 Festival of Sydney.

Here was no well-made play but a series of twenty six scenes spanning the years

1941 to 1944, seen through the eyes of a ten year old boy named Zoran, during the occupation of Skopje in Macedonia

The scenes worked like cinema shots, memory shots, flashing out of the dark, with the poetic intensity and reality of cinema verite The use of cinematic techniques was for me one of the most fascinating devices in this production, even to the holding up of key moments, and then repeating them for emotional emphasis, just as traumatic moments in a life are replayed over and over in the memory

The sound motifs in the play were a worn out piano where a flaxen-headed child practised Beethoven, a wartime gramophone for a young German soldier to play sentimental German waltzes, the wail of air raid sirens and classical music recorded at rock and roll pitch

Scenery and props were of the simplest kind traditionally used in "poor" theatre, except how many Australian companies would be prepared for a cast of nineteen, including seven children, a troupe of gypsy musicians, a horse and cart, a flock of pigeons freed into the audience, and another dapple grey to bring Zoran's father back from the partisan army with a red star on his uniform, to provide benediction, reward and forgiveness for his embattled family? I wish our theatres were as "poor" as this

And how many Australian playwrights would be allowed not the Cellblock Theatre, but the use of that marvellously dramatic outdoor location, the old Darlinghurst jail, with its grim courtyards and balconies, under the stars?

From the first moments the audience were led spellbound by the horse and cart and the strolling gypsy players to the first actual location, a high balcony where Georgij the Macedonian partisan struggles with two Bulgarian Gestapo agents, while his wife screams in labour inside Then in two separate courtyards faced by very steep rostra a group of actors play out the child's memory-story, using no makeup no elaborate costumes and a minimum of scenery

The fact that most of the audience could hardly hope to follow the dialogue in a mixture of Serbo-Croat, Bulgarian, Romany and German hardly seemed to matter

The mixture of brutality and tenderness, humour and tragedy defeated any language barrier as did the use of the strange admixture of revolutionary and Christian symbolism, culminating in the Red Army General arriving like Christ to wash of the thrown mud from his young wife's face (she has been the mistress of the young German officer), and she in her turn pulls off his boots and washes his feet in the same basin of water

Images of mutilation, and violence coexist with the sentimental tinny sound of German waltzes the flutter of pigeon's wings, the clop of hoofs, fitful gleams of light, children playing war games a one-legged gypsy boy on a leaping crutch, and Uncle Georgij paralysed and brain damaged from his vicious interrogation by the Gestapo alternately raging and bitterly comical, in a performance of such power by actor, Rade Serbedzija, that dominated a brilliant cast

If you missed it, catch up with it on Channel 0 28 later this year It's rough power, economy and poetic realism is seldom seen in our theatres

It's all in the timing

A BEDFULL OF FOREIGNERS

By Norman Kessell

A Bedfull of Foreigners by Dave Freeman Marian Street Theatre Sydney Opened 6 February 1981 Director Peter Williams Designer Michael O'Kane Lighting Toni Youlden
Cast Willie Fennell **Karak**, Ric Hutton **Heinz**, Diane Chamberlain **Brenda Parker**, Tom McCarthy **Stanley Parker**; Diana McLean **Helga Philby**, Mark Hashfield **Claude Philby**, Abigail **Simone**
(Professional)

It must be seen as unfortunate, to say the least, that the first production after the recent rumpus at Marian Street Theatre should be one that plays right into the hands of those "faceless assessors" who reported to the Theatre Board of the Australia Council that "standards had declined"

In case you've forgotten, when the Theatre Board advised Marian Street board of directors that its subsidy was under review, the board sacked its artistic director of eight years, Alistair Duncan

A Bedfull of Foreigners is one of your trivial Whitehall-type farces commercial theatres are frequently pilloried for importing often as a vehicle for a tired television personality Not quite the thing to be subsidised by taxpayers' money

Not that this production marks any change of policy by the theatre directors It was programmed long before the big upset In the normal run of things, it would pass muster as a light-hearted interlude As it is, it just looks like poor timing almost a cardinal sin in theatre

Of its genre Dave Freeman's piece is well-enough written and constructed with its split second comings and goings its neatly contrived moments of mixed-up pairings and mistaken identities its regular removal of the hero's trousers its oddball characters and its smattering of smutty inuendo As usual, nothing improper quite happens

And, I must hasten to add, there is little wrong with direction, staging or performance Very clearly most first-nighters were enjoying a good laugh

Scene is a run-down French hotel — admirably suggested in the tatty elegance of Michael O'Kane's setting — and with special credit for his stage effects

Into this mixing bowl are poured a working class couple, Stanley and Brenda he would rather have gone to Skegness than be dragged on to their first continental holiday a commercial traveller Claude, and his gold-digging mistress, Simone his wife, Helga, who arrives unexpectedly, a dopey hotel manager Heinz, and a comic concierge, Karak

Director Peter Williams has set a cracking pace to which his highly competent cast responds, especially Tom McCarthey as the long-suffering Stanley Mark Hashfield is amusing as the pompous Claude, Willie Fennell has a ball as the clowning concierge and Ric Hutton looks understandably embarrassed as the dim-witted hotel manager The three attractive ladies in due course strip down to their lace undies with, predictably, Abigail as the cynosure of attention

Quiet dignity and enjoyment

WHO STOLE MY CLOSET

by William Shoubridge

The Gay Theatre Company's new production *Who Stole My Closet* is in the way of being a pleasant, undemanding, night time cabaret with a tang of satirical revue somewhat like the old Phillip Street shows No one proselytizes doggedly for a cause and all references to homosexuality are couched in a wider focus of social mores and interpersonal foibles

The cast of four (Ric Herbert Dennis Scott, Rosalie Howard and Tony Preece) whiz frenetically through some apt and close to the bone vignettes with such clarity and conviction that you know that they are one with their material, and that most of the pieces if not written by them were all suggested through personal experience All of them can sing, dance (within the restrictions of a stage little bigger than a beach towel) and act a wide variety of (admittedly somewhat cliched) roles so that the evening never bogs down into either a self indulgent romp or a shrill harangue for social equality

What personifies the evening, through the cast's performance and John Barningham's direction is a quiet dignity and enjoyment about being gay that never takes on the sour tang of smugness when dealing with the implacability and ignorance of the straight world's strictures. This is why the shows that the GTC have been putting on have been attracting straight audiences as well, who in the present revue, take great enjoyment in seeing "straight" situations obliquely mirrored.

Those audiences though come largely from the Kings Cross, Paddo, Eastern suburbs bloc and thus much of the material could be said to be self congratulatory and preaching to the converted. It would be intereting to see the show at something like the Revesby Workers Club or somewhere else in the middle of working class straightdom, for this is the audiences and the attitudes that would most benefit from a liberal pouring of cold water.

The show, where it is now (the Wayside Chapel theatre) serves its audience well because it knows that audience and can therefore be that much more keen and devious in its satire.

Some of the material is merely there to pad the evening out (the fairy story of Prince Different for example) and some of the songs are chosen merely for a giggle (Sondheim's "Can that Boy Foxtrot") while other sketches (thankfully in the majority) send out barbs in all directions that no one in the audience could escape (the bedtime story of the wife wondering if hubby's one time homosexual experience was as good for him as she is, or the musical quartet of couples, one hetero, one homo glorifying their respective relationships and fidelities while being mutually debunked by the other).

Rosalie Howard is excellent in a good line of schtick mothers and warm bosomy females and she has a big, silky voice which she puts to great advantage, but as said, all the cast is wonderfully responsive to their material so that to single out individual items is to unpick the weave of a tightly written and directed show. There are times when certain characters are presented with too much relish so that you get back to dreary stereotypes without any substantial underpinning (viz. the swishy hairdresser and the leatherman singing "I never do anything twice").

Yet by and large the show is true to its aims and ideals, it entertains and chastens, it pulls hypocrisy and subterfuge apart and then quietly brings us together as the casts finishes by singing Jacque Brel's "If we only had love". It is a mark of the show's strength that no cloud cuckoo perfections are postulated and no invective is spat. It is good social political satire and far more rewarding than most examples of the genre.

THEATRE/QLD

STAFF REP
DON RATCHELOR

The odd sparkle amid the sea of mediocrity

IRVING BERLIN, THE MAN AND HIS MUSIC

by Stephen Amos

Irving Berlin, The Man And His Music The Oz People Twelfth Night Theatre Brisbane Qld Opened January 1981

Devised designed written and directed by **Ken Lord** choreographer **Diane Bowman** Musical Director **Tony McGill** Stage Manager **Alan Smith**
Cast **Ken Lord Margaret Davidson, Brett Davidson, Diane Bowman Robb Broad Suzanne Marshall**

A series of songs interpolated with specious dialogue masquerading as dramatic interlude This is probably the best way to describe the Oz Peoples offering at the Twelfth Night Theatre The major problem with unskilled performers attempting to do justice to songs made famous by some of the most talented actor singers in the world is that they are bound to reek of the second rate If it were not for the fact that Irving Berlin wrote the most memorable tunes that people are prepared to listen to, even if they were played on petrol drums and sung by ravens then perhaps the public would be more discerning It is all very well to say "Well they're young and they did try hard", but if they are going to charge to see the piece then one expects a certain degree of professionalism, both in the performances and in the staging

The standard of costuming and choreography was an insult, both to the memory of the man they purported to admire and adore, and to the audience Some of the dialogue, although based in the knock-knock tradition of humour, did raise the odd laugh The fact that the oldest gag in the business, ("Oh dear, someone has forgotten to ring the phone") was resorted to, speaks volumes for the confidence of the director in his material There was, however, the odd sparkle amid the sea of mediocrity, the talent, apparent in the potential of Brett Davidson which is enormous Also the many cameo appearances of Margaret Davidson deserve mentioning she was the only person who realised that Berlin's songs are about emotions, and it is therefore necessary to sing them with some conviction

It remains to be said that the audience on the whole seemed to love every minute of the evening In fact every song was hummed whistled and sung by them, and they departed wreathed in smiles The Twelfth Night Theatre is determined to put theatre back on the map after "a chequered career", well I m sure that by churning out efforts like *Irving Berlin, The Man And His Music* they will do just that There is no doubt whatsoever that the show was a success, or that it will be followed by more of a similar nature This is what disturbs me

Stretching the endurance

LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET
by Patsy McCarthy

Lady Audley's Secret by Charles Hazlewood Brisbane Arts Theatre Brisbane Qld Opened December 31 1980

Director **Eric Hauff**, Set Designer **Ken McCaffrey**, Stage Management **Geraldine Owens** and **Earl Butterworth** Lighting and Sound **Jason Whiting**
Cast Phoebe **Margaret Coleman**, Luke **Graham McKenzie** Sir Michael **George Thom** Lady Audley **Jan Goebel**, Alicia **Heather Goulter** Robert **Michael Bloyce**, George **Ian McAdam**

Melodrama is unusual fare for a serious theatre company, being the usual demesne of the theatre restaurant or pub entertainment area Many theatre-goers obviously feel that it is not too difficult to concentrate on the complexities of these plots while eating and drinking and making the occasional comment to friends with intermittent cheers and boos for heroes and villains One-and-a-half hours of melodrama entertainment in conducive surroundings is certainly palatable, but two-and-a-half hours of such theatre is stretching the endurance of any audience

The evening began with a half hour concert which varied in style from music hall sing-along to the Can Can and even included a short balletic interlude set on the beach at Crabb Island which caused this theatre-goer to wonder if she had really come to see *Lady Audley's Secret* as promised Jennepher Debenham's vaudeville contribution here as Vesta Victoria was the only exciting and polished performance of the evening

Eric Hauff's addition of songs to the original script of *Lady Audley's Secret* slowed the pace of the evening further Fortunately the cast members were good singers since the choice had been made to have more melos than drama They did however experience some difficulty in handling the style and did not manage to master any of the robust spontaneity and especially the timing needed for a good melodrama performance they certainly needed to relax and enjoy themselves so that the audience could do the same Jan Goebel brought some strength and expression to her performance of Lady Audley and Ken McCaffrey and Jason Whiting made positive contributions with good costume stage and lighting design

The audience mainly consisted of people who liked musical comedy and although they did not get very involved in the action of the drama or laugh much, cheer the hero or boo the villain, they did seem to be enjoying themselves for the first two hours anyway

My question at the end of the evening was What audience does the Arts Theatre want to attract? Will those lighthearted souls who sat through a long evening of old-time vaudeville come to see Pinter's *Birthday Party* Shaw's *Major Barbara* or Hampton's *Treats* which are the next three productions scheduled? The old adage of something for everyone is not often successful when a theatre builds definite audience expectations It will be interesting to see if the Arts Theatre can successfully manage to marry the two disparate wishes of entertaining the general public and providing serious theatre for more dedicated thespians

Professional but cheap nostalgia

KISS ME GOODNIGHT SERGEANT MAJOR

by Michael Morley/State Rep.

Kiss Me Goodnight Sergeant Major by Bryon Williams and Barbara Ramsay Promcon Corporation Adelaide Festival Centre Trust and the Arts Council of SA present the Stage Company's production
Director **Brian Debnam** Musical Director **Brian Carrigg**, Choreography **Jenny Toune**, Piano **Brian Carrigg**, Bass **Frank Mulders**, Drums **Ian Bradley**
Cast Sgt Major **John Francis**, Private Parts **Robin Harrison**, Veronica **Jacquy Phillips**, Rita **Deborah Little**
(Professional)

It has often been pointed out that World War Two is still awaiting its equivalent to *Oh What A Lovely War*. *Kiss Me Goodnight Sergeant Major* cannot, with the best will in the world, be said to fit this (or indeed any other) bill. It consists of cheap nostalgia, dull songs and mostly forced comedy routines, the whole strung together with a degree of organisation and ordering that, by comparison, would make the washing on the Seigfried Line look like a window display at Harrods.

But as it's part of a critic's responsibility to record the reception an audience gives to a performance, let me add that these patrons, suitably primed by liquid refreshments and obviously at home in the cabaret surroundings of The Space, loved it.

The show apparently ran for ages in Melbourne, but there is something depressing about watching an audience gulping down World War Two with its reisling, without the slightest rumble from the digestion and with nary a glance towards such unappetizing hors d'oeuvres as Auschwitz or Hiroshima. God forbid that these objections be interpreted as a wish on my part for a well-intentioned, sombre or dull documentary on the miseries of Crete, Dunkirk or the Western Desert. But a show which suggests that a great time was had by all and we can now lay us down to sleep with a military cuddle, happy heart and befuddled brain is just a bit much.

On the other hand, the professionalism of the performers and Brian Debnam's direction are plus points. The familiar songs receive familiar treatment, there's a splendid Andrews Sisters set piece and a couple of effective comic interludes. However, the two women are much stronger than the men and this tends to unbalance the show. Jacquy Phillips in particular shows a good sense of rhythm in her numbers and certainly projects her songs with more energy and drive than the others. Overall, in fact, the musical side of the evening was well handled, though the singalongs trailed dolefully and predictably through such gems as "There'll-be- blackbirds- over- the- blue- cliffs- of-wherever- you- are- my- moonshine- my only-moonshine, etc."

I don't object to such songs on ideological grounds, even though the smell of cheap optimism is pretty strong. I just think they're lousy, limp and lame. To such doses of comatose cheer "Pack Up Your Troubles" (WWI) offers a welcome and vigorous antidote.

Still, if the show makes Adelaide's audience aware of the existence of The Space, it will have achieved something. Maybe next time some of them might even return for a Stage Company production that shows this company to better advantage.

The cast of Kiss Me Goodnight Sergeant Major *in The Space.*

Professional foul

HABEAS CORPUS

by Larry Hall

Habeas Corpus by Alan Bennett The Playhouse Adelaide Festival Centre Opened January 3 1981
Director **Don Mackay** Designer **Michael Pearce;** Lighting **Les Bowden**
Cast Arthur Wicksteed **Frank Thornton** Muriel Wicksteed **Pat McDonald**, Dennis Wicksteed **Chris Connelly**, Constance Wicksteed **Diana Greentree** Mrs Swabb **Irene Hewitt** Canon Throbbing **Roy Baldwin**, Lady Rumpers **Phyllis Burford**; Felicity Rumpers **Liz Burch** Mr Shanks **Hardy Stow**, Sir Percy Shorter **John Murphy**, Mr Purdue **Chris Gaffney**
(Professional)

This production of *Habeas Corpus* has been tailored to Frank Thornton's Wicksteed but when lines are muffed ("Oh! I've gone all wrong, haven't I?") and the prompt's voice carries to the back of the house, we're really stuck with a bad case of the Emperor's clothes

This is not a TV studio Re-takes are not permitted Maybe if Thornton Wicksteed had borrowed a line from one of his fellow-sufferers — "Oh dear! I've got lockjaw all over" the day might just have been saved

Alan Bennett's play is, of course, marvellous It begins succinctly with the funniest joke of them all "We're all going to die" — and proceeds briskly and elliptically from there Everything is not what it seems The ignorant Mrs Swabb — introducing the characters, orchestrating them with sublime indiscretion throughout the piece and bowing them out with decorous magnanimity at close of play turns out to be knowing the forward-looking moralists are beset by the guilty past, the condemned man is healthy, the healthy one condemned, the virgin is pregnant, the vicar earthy, the impotent are lusty and the lusty are nigh on dead above all, the caring are careless It's one for one and none for all In the face of eternity who can blame them?

Here we have three socially sanctioned ways of coping with the inevitable recourse to intimacy (read "sex"), spirituality ("religion") and professional assistance (Dr Wicksteed — far from the world's wickedest, mind you), and a fourth which is rapidly gaining in respectability, the act of suicide Bennett's lampoon weaves these themes into a lively and intricate dramatic texture encapsulating and exploiting to the hilt an appalling range of human folly

A good script, then, wellknown faces, an expectant audience What went wrong? A touch of the sepulchral is indicated but Michael Pearce's set was simply too grey and threadbare it did however, with six wide entrances, allow for plenty of movement Yet under the direction of Don Mackay, the actors appear as so many ventriloquists' companions — all eyes mouths and squeaky voices The script put it all too aptly, "There are people running about with no legs at all"

I suppose one can blame the small screen for this these are television performers household friends But the actor's job is to fill the stage with presence and the audience with enthusiasm Here the whole exercise seems superfluous Those around me, expectant smiles frozen for much of the first half until the closing tableau allowed the cast to catch up with one another and, momentarily in unison, to relate across the footlights were not dissatisfied But the public is after all, well schooled by now in holding its collective breath through extensive and tedious commercial breaks

Frank Thornton as Captain Peacock sorry Dr Wicksteed oozing over-confidence waded through his part as if through treacle No one else kept pace with this lugubrious tempo and as he got slower the remainder accelerated Pat McDonald as Wicksteed's better half might have been able to restore some balance had she not seemed so obviously out of place (others to whom she is more familiar may have been less perturbed than I by her uncanny resemblance to Nancy Reagan!)

Diana Greentree as Constance and Hardy Stow as Shanks worked hard in parts insufficiently substantial to make any difference to the miasmic whole Roy Baldwin's Throbbing also made itself felt from time to time — but there was really nothing to prevent this vital and witty comedy from lapsing into ruinous, ailing farce

Frank Thornton as Wicksteed in the Festival Centre's Habeas Corpus

THEATRE/VIC

STATE REP
SUZANNE
SPENNER

Life size pyrotechnical evening

MOMMA'S LITTLE HORROR SHOW

by Cathy Peake

Momma's Little Horror Show Last Laugh Theatre Restaurant Melbourne Opened January 20 1981 Directed and devised by **Nigel Triffit**. Lighting director **Fred Wallace** Puppeteers **Patti de Foiz, Frank Italiano, Winston Appleyard**
(Professional)

As has been much remarked in the local Melbourne Press *Momma's Little Horror Show* initially tends to have a paralysing effect on its audiences, followed by unseasonal bursts of theorising and interpretation, tears and scuffles in the auditorium

All of which is no wonder Nigel Triffit has a remarkable ability to conjur with sound, light and music without ever losing the ambiguities of those media or offering us any semblance of commentary about the nature and serial order of his visual symbols.

Momma's is, in fact, a life-sized pyrotechnical evening with some rather spooky puppets It is theatre which appears to borrow from sources as diverse as Lindsay Kemp's *Flowers* and Kantor's *Dead Class* but which, in the main has developed a visual syntax all of its own

Dolly, its central character, is a life-size, whiter than white faceless and passive puppet who spends her time on stage being manipulated through the business of birth, life and death by a coterie of invisible and artful string-pullers

From time to time she shares the stage with a number of grotesque, similarly life-size, male puppets whose doings are indecipherable but who seem to be deriving some satisfaction chewing over the fat of her progress

Another Dolly — indeed a Dolly which is *all* face, has been constructed out of a rotating flat backstage It turns in a clockwise direction and comes complete with eyes that emit light rays and a large mouth full of square Colgate teeth Black wheeling bats who nest on the lighting tracks, a white bird, headless men, a Prospero figure, a red rose and countless other visual cameos and quotations also whirl about in Nigel Triffit's highly constructed black space

Fortunately they are all framed in neon light, and, together with Japanese lanterns which, like Dolly, manage to defy gravity, and ladders which rise into clouds of pink smoke, the frames do succeed in lightening the horror and parodying the guilt of Dolly's legless journey.

In the end, Nigel Triffit's puppet theatre might owe quite a lot to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* — with Dolly as Miranda who never really says anything either, and the Master of Ceremonies or Magician on High as a plausible Prospero complete with six hands (two each for Caliban and Ariel)

Interpretations of *Momma's* could go on for ever, especially if one is inclined not to concur with Nigel Triffit's own opinion that it is a show "without specific meaning" and one "where explaining it in words is irrelevant"

There can be no doubt that his pyrotechnical puppetry will continue to be very popular with audiences here and overseas And at many levels it deserves to be I just wish someone would take a file to Dolly's teeth, send her round in an anti-clockwise direction from time to time, and develop [illegible] the point where she stands on her own two feet.

Momma's Little Horror Show

A stunning piece of cabaret

EZPPEZZO BONGO

by Suzanne Spunner/State Rep.

Ezppezzo Bongo — The Busby Berkleys The Last Laugh Piano Bar Melbourne Vic Opened January 27 1981
Written and designed by **The Busby Berkleys.** Produced by **John Pinder** and **Roger Evans,** Technical Director **Laural Frank**
The Busby Berkleys The Broad **Peaches La Creme;** Max **Henry Maas,** Bongo **Sam Angelico,** Mizzier Stiffelio **Noel Busby**
(Professional)

In the beginning The Busby Berkleys were a duo who performed Noel Coward late night milk and whisky numbers at The Flying Trapeze In 1976 they were the stars of *The WunderKind Rocketship Show* — the opening production of The Last Laugh By then Noel Busby and Henry Maas had added a very young and very brilliant singer and pianiste, Peaches La Creme to their line up Their follow-up show, *Savoy Crackers at the Ritz* was a sell-out and established each of their unique talents and considerable style Noel was naughty and thirties, Henry told extraordinarily long and very funny stories and sang great bluesy songs and Peaches always played superbly and sang huskily while hiding behind her piano. At the crest of their success here, they left for Europe Now, four years later, in triumphal progress they have returned to the Last Laugh with a new show *Ezppezzo Bongo* and a new member former magician Sam Angelico

Ezppezzo Bongo is a stunning piece of cabaret that vindicates the promise of four years ago though to phrase it in that way is patronising they were exceptional and original then, and they are even more so now It should go without saying that each of them has become a more polished and versatile performer and the show as a whole in concept and style is denser and tighter than their earlier work Audiences who were familiar with their earlier shows will have the added satisfaction and delight in recognising elements then mere suggestions, and now fully developed, while newies may think it all happened immaculately OS in the cabaret hothouses of Munich and New York

Ezppezzo Bongo is full on retro punk, the white tie and tails of five years ago have gone and Peaches La Creme no longer hides behind a baby grand but is out front, up front and she's even speaking Their previous acts utilised fifties nostalgia and rock and roll but now it s mainstream New Wave with a cutting edge of parody that impales every rock culture cliche of the last thirty years The show opens with an elegant shadow play behind the Luxaflex blinds which are tastefully flanked by flats padded and upholstered in vynex to resemble a dismantled cocktail bar Bongo (Sam Angelico) and Max (Henry Maas) all grease and spiv, in two tone shoes do a little routine with oversize lime green plastic combs recalling the inimitable Ed "Cookie" Burns which introduces The Broad (Peaches La Creme) She totters on looking like an even more crazed Bette Midler and dishes up a couple of outrageously sexy songs climaxing in one "dedicated to the boys" about meat and sweet meats an epithalamion to fellatio if ever there was one In the first half the music is cool, smooth New Wave but with each number the pace increased until the title song "Ezppezzo Bongo Everybody's So Hip" explodes and soon the whole audience is clicking their fingers and tapping their feet

After nearly an hour and a half of unflagging frenelicism the show ends with a stunning version of "Blue Suede Shoes" and an orgy of destruction that would make The Who look reserved

If Circus Oz was a circus but also extended the range of experiences available in one, then The Busby Berkleys are the nearest thing to contemporary clowns you are likely to see

Good God, Artaud!

ARTAUD AND CRUELTY: QUICK DEATH TO INFINITY, TO HAVE DONE WITH THE JUDGEMENT OF GOD

By Colin Duckworth

We took a rather apprehensive musician friend to see this Artaudian assault upon the senses. He disappeared the moment they managed to get the door open at the end, and was not seen or heard of for twenty-four hours. Now, that might be called a real cathartic experience. Anyway, it certainly upset him. All that shattering noise and those grotesque naked white bodies and obsession with defecation clearly brought to the surface things that had been foolishly hidden away in the dark recesses of his psychological woodshed ever since who knows what traumatic infantile experience. Whatever it was, it obviously needed to be flushed out, and Artaud is the night-man *par excellence*.

In terms of what Artaud thought theatre is and should be doing, Greg Carter's and Jean-Pierre Mignon's double bill is both authentic and exciting (the present tense is dictated by the likelihood of interstate tours). Even those who find the content mystifying or distasteful will enjoy the verve, precision and visual impact achieved by his extraordinarily hard-working trio. Richard Murphet's mime-play, *Quick Death to Infinity*, calls to mind the kind of mosaic Varese creates out of a small number of musical fragments, endlessly repeated, revolved, reversed. The elements derive from a banal gangster situation: man with attache-case full of money drops case, scrabbles on floor for dollar bills, moll tries to distract him, door opens, man with gun fires, scream, man with money drops dead on bed. The shot, the scream, the fall. Then the scream, the fall, the shot. The fall, the shot and the scream. With bewildering rapidity the succession of events is recreated, with other striking visual images interspersed, following a cinematic technique that would be very simple on film, but demands immense energy, vigilance and split-second timing on stage. Each sequence ends in somebody's death, that's life for you. The visual patterns of flashing lights, deafening noise, Magritte-like images, increasingly frenzied (but always well-controlled) movement, and unpredictable combinations of actions, make this an ideal piece for choreographer-director Greg Carter, to whose physical demands the menacing, hairless Bruce Keller, drab, seedy moll Julie Forsyth and sleek, furtive Gary Samolin, respond with indefatigable vigour.

They need every second of the twenty-minute interval to recover and to cover themselves from head to toe, nothing omitted, with white clay. Why do this for a text which was written for sound broadcasting? Whatever Jean-Pierre Mignon's reasoning, it seemed to me that the quality of statuesque unreality, of stark mummified grotesqueness, was a brilliant accompaniment to the violent debasement and life-rejection of Artaud's text. With the lighting very simply produced by each actor's hand-held torchlight, the initial impact of these croaking pallid creatures crawling, groping and writhing in the surrounding blackness became increasingly intense as their mouthing of Artaud's demented by powerful text attained the animal roaring Artaud wanted.

To take this difficult text, one has to bear in mind the striving for purity that inspired it. "Where there is a stink of shit, there is a smell of being," wrote Artaud. His violent hatred for the body, his disgust at sex and defecation, his dream of a totally free (i.e., organless) Man, his belief that Man had been created by God without organs of sex and defecation, which were added by some evil force in the universe, all this at present in the words of *To have done with the Judgement of God*, but was also greatly reinforced by the physical presentation of this production. Plastering male genitals with some red-brown sticky substance (Quaker Oats and ketchup?) was perhaps the only action required.

Once again, the noise was unbearable, as instructed by Artaud for, for example, *There are No More Heavens* and *The Cenci's* final torture-chamber scene. Unfortunately the distortion made some of the words inaudible near the end, and one needed to understand them. I gather this is being rectified.

My only reservation about the productions is that they failed to put into practice Artaud's desire to put the spectator in the middle of the action. They use conventional theatre space and actor-spectator separation. The lighting effects of Murphet's play would admittedly, have been hard to achieve outside a defined acting area, but for the *Judgement* a more authentic Artaudian staging could have been attempted. In fact, this is a very purist criticism which is invalidated by the effectiveness of the grouping of the three white bodies being viewed as objects *out there*, not of our world. So after all, the directors were right to follow their own artistic intuition at the expense of pure Artaudian principles.

La Mama's Quick Death to Infinity. *Photo: Rod McNicholl*

THEATRE/WA

STATE REP
JOAN AMBROSE

Resoundingly fine performance

AMADEUS

by Collin O'Brien

Amadeus by Peter Shaffer. The Festival of Perth in association with the National Theatre Company. Playhouse, Perth, WA. Opened February 4, 1981. Director: **Stephen Barry**; Designer: **Tony Tripp**; Lighting: **Duncan Ord**; Original Music: **Dawn Emmanuel**; Stage Manager: **Richard Hartley**.
Cast: The Venticelli: **Ross Coli, Maurie Ogden**; Salieri: **Edgar Metcalfe**; von Strack: **Gerld Hitchcock**; Rosenberg, Opera Director: **Roger Griffiths**; Van Swieten, Prefect: **Ivan King**; Constanze Weber: **Leith Taylor**; Mozart: **Robert van Mackelenberg**; Joseph II: **ZJames Beattie**; Teresa Salieri: **Margaret Ford**; Cavalieri: **Jenny Dunstan**; Citizens etc: **Neale Brumby, Polly Low, William Kerr, Ken Kronberger, Stuart Robinson, Carlo McCbluss, Glen Swift, Jay Walsh**
(Professional)

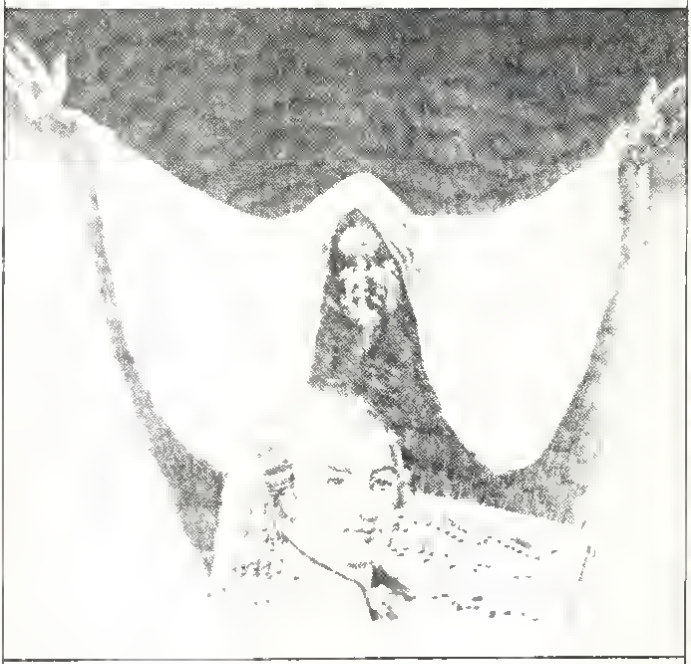
In *Royal Hunt of the Sun* and *Equus* Peter Shaffer showed an ability to find subject matter of wide appeal. He has done so again with *Amadeus*. The play is based on a true and intriguing mystery: did Antonio Salieri, mediocre composer but powerful *Kappelmeister* to Joseph II of Austria viciously contrive the death of the musical genius Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart? In this play he does, paying the tribute of mediocrity to genius, consuming envy. Salieri is our narrator, the why and how of his actions the focus of attention.

With somewhat more subtlety than is usual for him Shaffer piles irony on irony. Lacking Mozart's genius and therefore doomed to oblivion Salieri decides on infamous notoriety by killing the younger composer. Ironically, no one will believe he has. The crowning irony, however, is that Shaffer has done the job for him. By the time this play has had its undoubtedly successful runs worldwide and been made into a film millions will know the name of Salieri as well as they do that of Mozart, and better than they ever will Mozart's music.

The play parades Shaffers strengths and weaknesses. A good populariser, he can keep a story interesting, find the uplifting witty line when the narrative flags and is dramaturgically inventive. But he does depend too much on narration rather than embodying the story in dramatic action, is prone to a popular magazine level of psychologising, relies too heavily on stereotyped characters and the bones of his dramaturgy are often in evidence. He can also be witheringly banal. There are also lapses of tone. "Ta, very much," says Mrs Mozart, and more than once, to show us her plebeian origins. Modernization of speech patterns is allowable, but Eliza Doolittle in eighteenth century Vienna must surely make us wince.

Edgar Metcalfe is fine as Salieri. A consummate exploitation of sometimes difficult material, and I often felt he was carrying the playwright. A welcome return to Perth of Robert van Mackelenberg as Mozart, but he had less tractable material to work with. Is it conceivable that Mozart was nothing more than an infantile coprophile, setting aside the inexplicable musical genius that is? Shaffer has fallen into the pseudoromantic trap of thinking it is possible to be utterly worthless and still somehow rip off the odd masterpiece. Many a filthy, sponging, scottish "artist" of my youth (and beyond) shared this conviction but, on the evidence, not me. When Shaffer gives his Mozart more emotional depth in the second half Mr van Mackelenberg's performance improves enormously.

Good supporting acting given the often cliche roles the actors were called upon to play. For instance I'm not sure that every courtier of the period went about as though he had a bad smell under his nose.



Stephen Barry's aptly unobtrusive directing might have taken a positive step to work against some of Shaffer's more shuddering vulgarities. Good design of both set and costumes by Tony Tripp, evoking the right period flavour.

If *Amadeus* was the best new play of 1979 as the prestigious *Plays and Players* Award would have it, God preserve us all. But there is certainly enough there to make this a popular Festival of Perth offering and to allow Edgar Metcalfe to give us a resoundingly fine performance.

BOOKS

BY JOHN McCALLUM

Plays with a metaphysical dimension

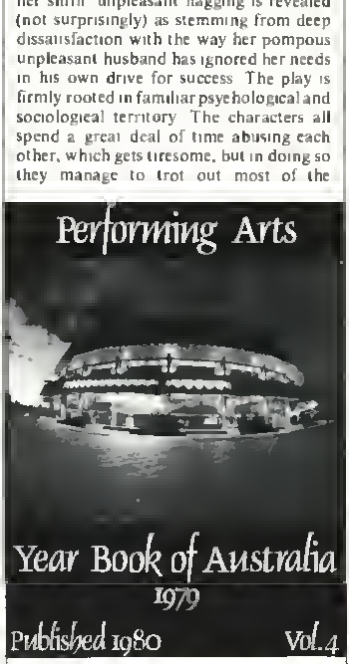
Performing Arts Yearbook of Australia 1979, Showcast Publications r r.p $25 00.
Cody versus Cody, by Leonard Radic, Playlah Press.
From the fourteenth floor you can see the Harbour Bridge, by Barbara Stellmach. Playlab Press
Echoes, and other plays, by Jill Shearer. Playlab Press.
Plays Volume Eleven by Eugene Ionesco, John Calder
Benmussa Directs, John Calder

This is a month for catching up with books which ought to have been reviewed months ago It seems unfair, for instance, to be reviewing the 1979 *Performing Arts Yearbook* in 1981

The *Yearbook* gets better, and bigger with each issue It is now nearly 500 pages long and crammed with production details and photographs of every stage film and television production in the country It has become not only a fascinating book to browse in but a useful reference work as well The Film, Opera and Dance sections have interesting and sometimes provocative introductions (why not the Theatre and Television sections?) and some attempt has been made to describe the action of new plays and give brief accounts of what has happened to some companies during the year *The Yearbook* has got to the stage where inaccuracies and omissions must be blamed on the companies which supply the information and not on the energetic team, still headed by David Williams and Colin Croft, who produce the book

Queensland's Playlab Press continues to produce inexpensive well-presented editions of new plays (without any subsidy other than an establishment grant from the Literature Board New volumes are *Codi versus Codi* by Leonard Radic, *From the fourteenth floor you can see the Harbour Bridge* by the tireless Barbara Stellmach, and *Echoes and other plays* by Jill Shearer

Codi versus Codi is described as "a bitter comedy", although it is more bitter than comic A frustrated angry, middle-aged woman fantasizes about being put on trial to explain her unhappy marriage In a series of cleverly constructed scenes which move from fantasy to reality to flashback her shrill unpleasant nagging is revealed (not surprisingly) as stemming from deep dissatisfaction with the way her pompous unpleasant husband has ignored her needs in his own drive for success The play is firmly rooted in familiar psychological and sociological territory The characters all spend a great deal of time abusing each other, which gets tiresome, but in doing so they manage to trot out most of the



standard marital problems The play suffers, like many realistic issue-plays, from a refusal to generalize — which weakens its social import

Barbara Stellmach is one of our most prolific playwrights, and if she is not widely known in the professional theatre it is because she is also a specialist As a reviewer says, quoted in the Playlab Press publicity, *From the fourteenth floor* is "another good and entertaining reliable Stellmach play" In it a middle-aged woman (much nicer than Mrs Cody) finds herself accidentally sharing a hotel room with a man she loved in her youth but has not seen for 20 years He is a rotter, and she almost falls for him again but by now she has more sense so she wisely returns to her quiet Queensland country town The play has what I can only describe as quaint, old-world charm, and I enjoyed reading it It says as much about attitudes to sex and love among the middle-aged as does *Codi versus Codi*, and says it much more simply and directly

The most interesting of these volumes, however, is Jill Shearer's *Echoes and other plays* Here are four deceptively simple encounters, each of which hints at a bizarre and frightening undercurrent in the characters' superficially ordinary interactions The hints are very elusive at the moment but Shearer is developing a style and a distinctive voice of her own which promise good things to come These plays have a metaphysical dimension tantalizingly understated, which Ionesco says is essential to all Art see below

Echoes shows a sinister encounter on a beach between an ordinary (?) family and a Mysterious Stranger It could all have a rational explanation (as Alrene Sykes says in her introduction) but because nothing is stated overtly the effect is quite surreal *Stephen* is a moving meeting between yet another middle-aged woman and her teenage son who lives with her estranged husband Again it is what they do not say to each other which gives the play its strength *Nocturne* is a strange meeting between a talkative wayfarer and a mute cellist (who spends the entire play playing Bach's Nocturne) on a country road with an abstract tree! It is a fine central image, marred slightly by the banality of the wayfarer's chatter Presumably in production the music wins the encounter triumphantly *The Kite* shows another meeting of (near) strangers — a young girl who thinks she might want to kill herself and a recluse who flies kites in an attempt to ward off the anguish and absurdity of life Appropriately for the last play in the book they come together at the end — having something to offer each other

It is a tribute to the strength of Shearer's images in these new plays that the next book to be reviewed seems to follow naturally It is Volume Eleven of Calder's series of Ionesco's plays It contains a fascinating but (on one reading) confusing major play, *The Man with the Luggage* two short plays which were used in *Oh! Calcutta!* and *Carte Blanche* and an important essay, *Why do I write?* What is exciting about the book is the strong emphasis on the metaphysical dimension in playwriting which for Ionesco is the fundamental one He writes, for example,

Continued on page 56

ACT

THEATRE

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 6488)
Playhouse Universal Theatre presents *Seanlan*, with Max Gillies March 10-14 *I Colombaioni* March 18-21
THEATRE 3 (47 4222)
Canberra Repertory Lunchtime season *Rosalind* by JM Barrie, director, Corinne Fraser To March 6
The Chocolate Soldier by Oscar Straus March 9-13 Australian Theatre Workshop Lunchtime Season *The Proposal* by Anton Chekhov, director, Warwick Baxter March 17-27 Canberra Repertory Company *Count Dracula* by Ted Tiller, director, Pam Rosenberg, designer, Russell Brown, special effects, Tony Ashcroft To March 14
REID HOUSE THEATRE WORKSHOP (47 0781)
The Jigsaw Company presents *Outpost* by Toe Truck (TIE Team Sydney), original director, Robert Love TIE programme for secondary schools, years 7-9 with director, Graeme Brosnane
CANBERRA THEATRE (49 7600)
Australian Opera presents *I Masnadieri* March 6, 9, 11 *Rigoletto* March 7, 10, 12. *For entries contact Marguerite Wells on 49 7600*

NSW

THEATRE

ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH WALES (357 6611)
School Tours
Norman Berg, for infants and primary Until March 13
Mr Jupiter's Childrens' Theatre, for infants and primary, South Coast until March 13
Sidetrack Theatre Company for primary and secondary North West and Hunter until March 13
AXIS ARTISTS (969 8202)
Axis Fun House Supper Club
Ramada Inn, Pacific Highway Crows Nest
The Billie Bacos Tonight Show by Tony Harvey and Malcolm Frawley; directed by Peter Meredith, music, Gary Smith with Greg Bepper, Amanda George, Christie Briggs Steven Sacks, Tony Harvey Throughout March
BONDI PAVILION THEATRE (30 7211)
Pools Paradise by Philip King, directed by John Gully, with helen Livermore, Hilary Bamberger, John Wingrove, Kate Ferguson, Arthur Baratta Graham Stroud and Tracey Lee Until March 14
The Heiress by Ruth and Augustus Goetz A Players Theatre Company presentation, From March 25
ENSEMBLE THEATRE (929 8877)
I Ought to be in Pictures by Neil Simon, directed by Hayes Gordon Opens during March
FRANK STRAIN'S BULL 'N' BUSH THEATRE RESTAURANT (358 1988)
The Good Old, Bad Old Days with Noel Brophy, Barbara Wyndon Garth Meade, Neil Bryant and Helen Loram, directed by George Carden Throughout March
GENESIAN THEATRE (55 5641)
The Vigil by Ladislav Fodor, directed by Colleen Clifford Throughout March.
HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (212 3411)
Evita by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, directed by Harold Prince, with Jennifer Murphy, Peter Carroll, John O'May and Tony Alvarez Continuing
HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY (26 2526)
Civic Theatre *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum* Director, Aarne Neome From March 18
KIRRIBILLI PUB THEATRE (92 1415)
Kirribilli Hotel Milson's Point
The Private Eye Show by Perry Quinton and Paul Chubb, music, Adrian Morgan, lyrics, P P Cranney, directed by Perry Quinton with Zoe Bertram, Jane Hamilton, Patrick Ward, Bill Young and Michael Ferguson Throughout March
MARIAN STREET THEATRE (498 3166)
A Bed Full of Foreigners by Dave Freeman, directed by Peter Williams Until March 21
Outside Edge by Richard Harris Commences March 27
MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (977 6585)
Pardon Our Privates directed by Peggy Mortimer; with Ron Frazer, Maggie Stuart, and Lee Young Throughout March
NEW THEATRE (519 3403)
Colonial Experience by Walter Cooper, directed by Frank McNamara, with Peter Talmacs and Marty O'Neill Until March 14
Yobbo Nowt by Kevin McGrath, directed by Marie Armstrong Commences March 21
NIMROD THEATRE (699 5003)
Upstairs *The Choir* by Errol Bray; directed by Neil Armfield, with David Atkins, Simon Burke, Tony Sheldon and Peter Kowitz Into March
The Three Sisters by Anton Chekhov, directed by Aubrey Mellor, with John Bell, Michele Fawdon, Barry Otto, Drew Forsythe and Cathy Downes Commences March 25
Downstairs *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* by Dario Fo, directed by Brent McGregor, with George Whaley, Deborah Kennedy, John McTernan and Tony Taylor Throughout March
Late Night Shows Los Trios Ringbarkus from Melbourne's Flying Trapeze Cafe Throughout March
NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF (357 1200)
Theodore, for primary schools and *The Unheard World of Jasper Lawson* for secondary schools; both directed by Ian Watson, with Nola Colefax, David London, Colin Allen, Bill Eggerking and Rosemary Lenzo Throughout March
Q THEATRE (047 21 5735)
Penrith: *Privates on Parade* by Peter Nichols Until March 14
The War Horse by John Upton Commences March 20
RIVERINA TRUCKING COMPANY (069 25 2052)
Contact theatre for details
THE ROCKS PLAYERS (569 0223)
Cnr Marion and Renwick Sts, Leichhardt
Female Transport by Steve Gooch, directed by Julie Dunsmore In repertory with *Cross Fire* by Jennifer Compton, directed by Amanda Field Throughout March
SEYMOUR CENTRE (692 0555)
York Theatre
Mari Barnes by David Edgar; directed by Aarne Neeme, with Natalie Bate, Peter Carmody, Lucy Charles, Warren Coleman, Lyndon Harris, Julie Hudspeth, Greg Lister, Elaine Paton and Bill Summers Commences March 5
SHOPFRONT THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (588 3948)
Free drama workshops on weekends Shopfront Theatre Touring Company touring metropolitan and country areas with *The Tale Plat* directed by Don Munro and *The Third World Horror Show* directed by Michael Webb
Youth Theatre Showcase *The Shopfront Show* created by the Shopfront Youth Theatre and directed by Errol Bray March 6 Z& 7 *The Canterbury Tales* presented by the Australian Theatre for Young People and directed by Jane Westbrook March 13, 14, 20 & 21 Shopfront Touring Company productions March 27 & 28
SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY (20588)
Drama Theatre, SOH
The Man from Mukinupin by Dorothy Hewett directed by Rodney Fisher, with Ruth Cracknell, Maggie Dence, Judi Farr, Colin Friels John Gaden, Ron Haddrick, Jane Harders and Noni Hazlehurst Until

March 18
Hamlet by William Shakespeare, directed by William Gaskill, with Kate Fitzpatrick, John Gaden, Alexander Hay, Noni Hazlehurst, George Spartels and Colin Friels Commences March 28
THEATRE ROYAL (231 6111)
Whose Life Is It Anyway? by Brian Clark, directed by Brian Hewitt-Jones with Robert Coleby, Annette Andre, Don Pasco, Elaine Lee, David Foster, David Nettheim, Dorothy Alison, Phillip Ross, Keith Lee, Lenore Smith and Fred Steele Commences March 26
THEATRE SOUTH (297311)
Travelling North by David Williamson, director Gordon Streek, designer Bill Pritchard, with Brian Blain and Faye Montgomery

DANCE

THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET (20588)
Opera Theatre, SOH
Carmen by Roland Petit, *Kettentanz* by Gerald Arpino and *Suite en Blanc* by Serge Lifar Commences March 18
SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY (20588)
Opera Theatre, SOH
An Evening by Graeme Murphy March 4-14
For entries contact Carole Long on 357 1200/909 3010

QLD

THEATRE

BRISBANE ARTS THEATRE
(36 2344)
The Birthday Party by Harold Pinter, director, Fred Wesley, designer, Greg Katahanas with Beverley Wood, Bill Weir, and Ian Leigh-Cooper To March 14
Major Barbara by George Bernard Shaw, director, Jennifer Radbourne, designer, Graham McKenzie From March 19
HER MAJESTY'S (221 2777)
Craig Russell March 9-13
LA BOITE (36 1622)
The Runaway Man by Mick Barnes director and designer, David Bell To March 7
Colonial Experience by Walter Cooper, director, Eileen Beatson designer, David Bell From Mar 13
QUEENSLAND THEATRE
COMPANY (221 5177)
Annie by Thomas Meehan, Charles Strouse, and Martin Charmin, director, Alan Edwards, designer, James Ridewood and Graham MacLean, with David Clendinning and Bev Shean To March 7
Cat On A Hot Tin Roof by Tennessee Williams, director Rodney Fisher, designer, Graham MacLean From March 27
TN COMPANY (352 5133)
Hamlet by William Shakespeare, director and designer, Bryan Nason, with Geoff Cartwright Jennifer Blocksidge, Leo Wockner and Judith Anderson To March 7
The Choir by Errol Bray director, Bryan Nason, with Malcolm Cork and Geoff Cartwright From March 18
YOUNG TN COMPANY (527 559)
The Secret Life Of Walter Mitty Director Jane Atkins designer Jane Atkins and Ian Perkins, music, Leon Carr, lyrics, Earl Shuman, choreographer, Eve Davey, musical director, Cath Burke March 11-28

OPERA

HER MAJESTY'S (221 2777)
The Australian Opera March 9-13
For entries contact Don Batchelor on 356 9311

SA

THEATRE

ACTING COMPANY (233 4333)
Them by Nick Gill director, Sue Rider Schools and theatre performances March 2-28 Theatre 62, march 16-28
ARTS THEATRE (212 5777)
Angas St Promcon presents Mark Harding March 3-7
ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY THEATRES (267 5988)
Directors workshop throughout March
CORE THEATRE COMPANY
Sheridan Theatre *Look Back In Anger* by John Osborne, director, Alan Lyne March 10-14
LA MAMA THEATRE
Look Back In Anger by John Osborne, director, Pauline Terry-Beitz March 16-28
Q THEATRE
89 Halifax St *Tarantara! Tarantara!* by Ian Taylor, director, Richard Trevaskis, musical director, Neil Webber To March 21
STATE THEATRE COMPANY
(51 5151)
Playhouse Playbox Theatre Company presents *Wings* by Arthur Kopit director, Malcolm Robertson, designer Richard Prins, lighting designer, Keith Edmundson, with Patricia Kennedy

DANCE

SCOTT THEATRE
Kinetic Energy Dance Company presents *Gallery Dances* March 11-14
For entries contact Edwin Relf on 267 5988

TAS

THEATRE

SALAMANCA THEATRE COMPANY
(23 5259)
Taking Shape devised by Mark Bromilow, director, Peter Townsend re-rehearsed byt Ken Kelso For grades 1-4 From March 9
I've Got A Name by John Lonie director Richard Davey, re-rehearsed by Ken Kelso For grades 5-9 From March 9
The Last Resort by Ken Kelso, director, Ken Kelso For grades 9 and above From March 9
THEATRE ROYAL (34 6266)
The Diary Of Anne Frank From March 25
Big Bad Mouse with Erik Sykes March 10-18
Habeus Corpus with Frank Thornton To March 4
For entries contact Anne Campbell on (049) 67 4470

VIC

THEATRE

ARENA THEATRE (249 667)
Touring Secondary Schools *Minimata* devised by the Coventry Belgrade TIE Team
White Man's Mission devised by the Popular Theatre Troupe

ARTS COUNCIL OF VICTORIA (529 4355)
Touring Secondary Schools *McJad* — Melbourne Contemporary Jazz Art Duo, with Keith Hounslow and Tony Gould.
Touring Lower Secondary and Upper Primary *Peasants All* with Phillip Astle and Paul Williamson.
Touring Primary and Kindergarten *Soundscapes* sound effects and music from the Lightening Creek Trio.

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP (347 7133)
Front Theatre: *The Two Headed Calf* by Stanislav Witkiewicz (Witkacy), translated, adapted and directed by Roger Pulvers, with Maggie Millar, William Gluth and Howard Stanley. Throughout March.

COMEDY CAEE THEATRE RESTAURANT (419 2869)
Downstairs *Tram* with Mary Kenneally, Stephen Blackburn, Geoff Brooks and Rod Quantock. Throughout March.

COMEDY THEATRE (662 3233)
Thei're Playing Our Song by Neil Simon, director, Philip Cusack, musical director, Dale Ringland, set designer, Douglas W Schmidt, with Jackie Weaver and John Waters. Throughout March.

DRAMA RESOURCES CENTRE (347 5649)
Transition programme *2D Or Not 2D* by Bouverie St TIE Team. Touring schools.

FLYING TRAPEZE CAFE (41 3727)
Expo Con And Vince 81 with Tony Rickards, Simon Thorpe and Toni Edwards. Throughout March.

LA MAMA THEATRE (347 6085)
Script For 4 Friends by Graham Simmons, director, Rex Jonas. To March 15.
Primate and *Sweenei's Supper Show* both written by Ian Nash, director, Brad Farney. March 19 — Apr 5.

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (663 3211)
The Best Little Whore House In Texas director, Jerry Yoder, with Lorraine Bayly and Alfred Sandor. Throughout March.

LAST LAUGH THEATRE RESTAURANT (419 6226)
Momma's Little Horror Show devised and directed by Nigel Triffitt. Throughout March.

MILL THEATRE COMPANY (22 2318)
Regular Community Activities. Mill Nights, Run Of The Mill, The Mill Club.

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (654 4000)
Athenaeum Theatre: *Mourning Becomes Electra* by Eugene O'Neill, director, Michael Blakemore; designer, Tanya McCallin. To March 28.
Athenaeum 2: *The Maids* by Jean Genet, director, Elizabeth Alexander, designer, Christopher Smith. To March 28.
Russell Street Theatre: *Man From Mukinupin* by Dorothy Hewett, director, Judith Alexander, designer, Anna Erench. To April 11.

MUSHROOM TROUPE (376 7364)
Touring Upper Primary and Lower Secondary: two plays, one dealing with Heroines and Heroes of early Australian aviation, the other a surrealist theatre piece. March 2-7.

MURRAY RIVER PERFORMING GROUP (21 7615)
Back To Dean Street by the performing ensemble. From March 25.
Twin City Festival: *School For Clowns* with the Clown Ensemble. March 7-14. At Orange Festival March 19-April 3. Circus Workshops throughout March.

PRINCESS THEATRE (662 2911)
Victorian Arts Council presents: *Habeas Corpus* by Alan Bennett, director, Don McKay, with Frank Thornton and Pat McDonald. March 11-28.

THEATRE WORKS (285 0287)
The Go Anywhere Show devised and directed by Theatre Works. Throughout March.

UNIVERSAL THEATRE (419 3777)
The Playbox Theatre Company presents: the Nimrod Theatre production of *The Choir* by Errol Bray, director: Neil Armfield. From March 19. *Burlesco* devised by Side Show Company, artistic director, Michael Matou. March 2-14.

WEST COMMUNITY THEATRE COMPANY (370 7034)
The Players by Phil Sumner and Ian Shrives, director, Ray Mooney. Touring football clubs in Western Region.
Just A Simple Bloke director, Phil Thomson, with Phil Sumner, Ian Shrives and Greg Sneddon. Throughout March.

MAJOR AMATEUR COMPANIES
Basin Theatre Group (762 1082)
Clayton Theatre Group (878 1702)
Heidelberg Rep (49 2262)
Malvern Theatre Company (21 1 0020)
Pumpkin Theatre (42 8237)
Williamson Little Theatre (528 4267)
1812 Theatre (796 8624)

DANCE

NATIONAL THEATRE (534 0221)
Australian Contemporary Dance Company presents:
Tchaikovski Suite by Lucyna Sevitsky.
Emanations concepts by Roger Kemp, choreographer: Ron Becker.
Roar Of The Greasepaint, Smell Of The Crowd choreographer, Chris Janides. March 23-28.
Australian Dance Theatre. To March 14.

MOVING ARTZ (419 5993)
Exercise With Music by Zandie Acton.

For entries contact Connie Kramer on 267 5938.

WA

THEATRE

HAYMAN THEATRE (350 7026)
Lunchtime performances in March. Programme to be announced.

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE (321 6288)
The Old Vic Theatre Company presents: *The Merchant Of Venice*. To March 7.
Celluloid Heroes by David Williamson, Nimrod production, under the auspices of the Elizabethean Theatre Trust. From March 25.

THE HOLE IN THE WALL (381 2403)
Vinegar And Brown Paper by Edgar Metcalfe, director, Edgar Metcalfe. March 4-March 28.

THE NATIONAL THEATRE (325 3500)
No Names, No Pack Drill by Bob Herbert, director, Stephen Barry. March 3-March 21.

THE REGAL THEATRE (281 1557)
Tomfoolery with Tom Lehrer. To March 21.

ST GEORGES HALL (325 3500)
Hay St. Actor's Company presents *Ring Around The Moon* by Jean Anouth, director: ken Campbell-Dobbie. March 18-April 5.

DANCE

WA BALLET COMPANY (321 5297)
His Majesty's Theatre. Schools programme *Peter And The Wolf, Kal* and *The Tempest*. March 9-20.

OPERA

WA OPERA COMPANY (321 5689)
Fidelio In Concert musical director: Gerald Krug. March 12, 14.

For entries contact Joan Ambrose on 299 6639.

From page 52

of political theatre, that "without metaphysics politics can never present the basic problem" and that "ideological theatre is inferior to the ideology it attempts to illustrate and becomes merely instrument." This would be provocative stuff in Australia except that we have such an underdeveloped idea of metaphysics that the contest between the two is not given a fair hearing.

The Man with the Luggage is a beautiful play. It draws on the familiar feelings of alienation which every traveller feels in a strange land and extends those feelings to show the central character alienated from his family (and people in general) and displaced in time. If in the end the play does not work it is because it manages to dislodge us from our normal contact with the world without putting us in contact with the new metaphysical "wonder" at existence for which Ionesco is constantly searching.

I have left far too little space to do justice to another Calder volume. *Benmussa Directs*, which prints the scripts of two exciting productions by the French director Simone Benmussa. They are *Portrait of Dora* by Helene Cixous, an account of the case of one of Freud's first patients from her point of view, and *The Singular Life of Albert Nobbs* adapted by Benmussa from a story by George Moore. More than most plays I have reviewed I wish I had seen the productions; the accounts of them, and the hints in the scripts imply so much. Benmussa is that rare thing, an articulate director who can write about her work in fundamental aesthetic terms, transcending the usual "what-we-were-trying-to-achieve" comments. Particularly I commend this book to the Women Directors' Workshop at Nimrod. I don't know exactly what you'll get from it, but I'm sure it will be fascinating.

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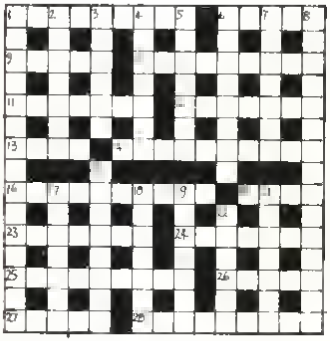


THESPIA'S PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 29.

Name .....

Address .....

..... P. Code .....

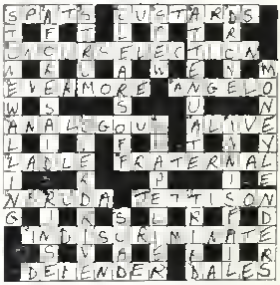
Across

1 Could be one of 19 [9]
6 "Methought I heard a voice cry no more!"
9 See a hundred leave HQ and come in here [5]
10 Lute vibes emanating from the waiting room (9)
11 One who previously mentioned a generator (7)
12 Sounds as if girl failed to catch the soulful philosopher [7]
13 Told in some way that he was a bad egg (4)
14 Have several parts to understand (10)
16 Act as a substitute[1] [10]
20 Perhaps Wagga Wagga has a place to put the loot [4]
23 Types of glasses to fix on the ocean (7)
24 Landlord embraces me in the lift! (5)
27 Ypres revisited for mass funeral (5)
28 Simple equestrian on an iron steed[2] (4, 5)

Down

1 Victorian vessel is run over (3,9,3)
2 Worker drug cures indigestion (7)
3 To stray towards a copy of this is to make mistakes [6]
4 Survival or its alternative in Italy we hear (7)
5 Dishonesty tampers with a re-endorsement [8]
6 Vivacious sprite I'd join in a reel (8)
7 Hard to find out the vile use [7]
8 Make the handy man rotate rigid spit with a flourish (15)
15 Softly starts again like Stanley (8)
17 Boring occupation of dentist, RSM, Geologist etc [7]
18 Sacred hour of the infusion? (7)
19 Carmen at the confluence of noted waterways (7)
18 Sacred hour of the infusion[1] (7)
21 Tired Onassis found in the nettle patch [7]
22 Rifous cheers for the artist (6)

The first correct entry to be drawn on March 25 will receive one year's free subscription to *TA*.



Last month's winner was A. Holzberger of Windsor, Qld.